Viśvāmitra:
Intertextuality and Performance of Classical Narratives about Caste

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation, "Viśvāmitra: Intertextuality and Performance of Classical Narratives about Caste," is a literary and folkloristic study of the epic and purāṇic narratives of Viśvāmitra. Stories of this sage recount how, through sheer will and determination, this legendary king successfully changes his *varṇa* and becomes a Brāhmaṇ. In Sanskrit literature, he comes to be the most profound representation of human will and power, a character as much feared for his great temper as admired for his great compassion. Viśvāmitra is an icon of counter-normativity, and this dissertation seeks to understand how a set of legends about him, embedded within larger epic and purāṇic texts as 'textual performances,' construct literary spaces in which the boundaries of caste are negotiated.

Developing a post-Dumontian understanding of caste not simply as an unquestioned, watertight system of social categories but as contextual applications of ideologies, this dissertation seeks to foreground the *narrative* as the site where this historical negotiation of *varṇa* occurs. The narratological investigation of this dissertation

explores how these legends performatively map *varṇa* categories onto domestic spaces within the storyworld. The successful movement of characters like Viśvāmitra across these *varṇa*/domestic boundaries produces ruptures within an ordinarily rigid social hierarchy. This study suggests that through such narrative maneuvers, counter-normative legends are able to raise legitimate questions about caste, questions that are not easily answerable and that compel retellings of these stories for centuries.

A comparative analysis of variation in the Viśvāmitra legends reveals that epic and purāṇic texts provide different normativizing answers to these questions through the embedding process – that is, in the 'textual performance.' To understand how this performance works, how interactions between narrators and audiences result in different interpretations of Viśvāmitra's challenges to orthodoxy, this dissertation compares the Sanskrit textual versions to those found in contemporary *nāradīya kīrtan*, a genre of Marathi devotional storytelling and preaching. This dissertation uniquely suggests that the concept of homology – the discursive equation of storyworld events to realworld issues through performer-audience interaction – is a critical aspect of performance, and ultimately the means through which legendary narratives become sites of ideological negotiation in traditional South Asian cultural forms.

॥ मात्रे ॥

To my mother

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every word of this dissertation attests to the years of rigor, guidance, and encouragement they provided me at Berkeley. I wish also to express my gratitude for the insights of Aditya Behl, who was an early member of the committee, to Sally Sutherland-Goldman, who made Sanskrit a joy to study, and to Raka Ray, George Hart, Beth Berry, and the rest of Berkeley's rich academic community who have consistently provided professional support. I also would like to thank Stuart Blackburn, whose critical reading came at a timely moment in this project.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

This dissertation has combined two schemes of roman transliteration to represent words in South Asian languages. The first scheme, for Sanskrit words, is as follows:

Vowels:	a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au

anusvāra	ṁ				
visarga	ḥ				
Consonants					
guttural	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
palatal	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
retroflex	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
dental	t	th	d	dh	n
labial	p	ph	b	bh	m
semivowel	y	r	l	v	
sibilants	s (*dental*)		ś (*palatal*)	ṣ (*retroflex*)	
aspirate	h				

This method has been used for Sanskrit quotations as well as general terminology (e.g. "*varṇa*" or "Kṣatriya"). In the Bibliography as well as in quoted passages, the scheme of the original citations has been maintained. The sole exception is the term "Brahman." Though Sanskrit usage dictates "Brāhmaṇa," I have used "Brahman" referring to the *varṇa* for sake of readability and in order to avoid confusion with the Vedic literary genre of the same name. For the god, "Brahmā" is used, while for the Absolute, the term used is *brahman*.

Marathi transliteration largely follows the Sanskrit scheme, with the following exceptions: (1) Word-final 'a' is omitted unless following a consonant cluster (e.g., Rāma becomes Rām, but Viśvāmitra is unchanged). (2) The Marathi retroflex 'l' is represented as 'ḷ' (e.g., *kāla* [time] becomes *kāḷ*). (3) Nasalized vowels (i.e., a vowel + *anusvāra*) in Marathi and Hindi are represented by a '~' above the vowel as follows:

ã ā̃ ĩ ī̃ ũ ū̃ ẽ aĩ õ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: READING, TELLING, AND LISTENING TO THE STORIES OF VIŚVĀMITRA

On New Year's Day of 1998, I boarded a plane for India for a semester-long stay in the modern, bustling Maharashtrian city of Pune. It was my parents' hometown—a place I had visited countless times—but as we landed in the musty night air of what was then called Sahar International Airport in the city that was then called Bombay, my mind was a mix of anticipation and apprehension. I was returning after nearly four years, and this was my first trip as a doctoral student of Sanskrit. I had the intention of spending a semester at Poona University to refine my Sanskrit reading abilities, to learn to play the *tabla*, and to explore a topic for my dissertation that might somehow combine my interests in Sanskrit, caste, and stories.

I eventually found my way to the office of Professor Saroja Bhate, then the Head of the Sanskrit Department at Poona University, now the Honorary Secretary of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, and a very dear friend of my mother—so close that even now I feel compelled to call her *māvaśī* (mother's sister). Hearing that I was interested in stories, she promptly instructed me to read, *sarga* by *sarga*, (canto by canto), the *Bālakāṇḍa*, the first book of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. "There is no better story," she assured me, "with which to start your studies." And so for the next few months, I read one *sarga* per day, sometimes taking a few hours, sometimes all day, and a few months later, I managed to read all seventy-six *sargas* of the *Bālakāṇḍa*.

Along with my daily epic readings and evening *tabla* classes, I would occasionally drop in for some tea and conversation at the house of another family acquaintance, Vaman Vasudev Kolhatkar, a very close friend of my father since boyhood. Vaman-*kākā* (Uncle Vaman), as I have always called him, is the most unusual person I have met in India, balancing traditional and modern ways of life in an austere but exciting home in the Erandwane district of Pune. The son of the acclaimed 'nationalist' *kīrtankār* and āyurvedic experimentalist Vasudev S. Kolhatkar, a Chitpavan Brahman who moved from Goa to Pune in the early twentieth century, Vaman-*kākā* was schooled for ten years of his youth in the traditional Vedic *pāṭhaśālā* system. As an adult, along with his brothers, he has made a comfortable living producing and marketing a line of his father's āyurvedic medicines, including the internationally popular Kailas Jeevan. However, distancing himself from the more urban socialite lifestyle of his younger brothers, Vaman-*kākā* extricated himself from the family business in the 1980s and now devotes his energies to maintaining a traditional household where Vedic and śāstraic knowledge are allowed to dwell in a pure setting, and where the traditions that his father had worked so hard to establish may be kept alive.[1] And so in the most interior space of his home, inside the kitchen, there is a dark and private *devghar* (a worship room) in which Vaman-*kākā* and his son Samihan conduct daily *sandhyā* and *ahnika* rituals at sunrise and at dusk, giving everyday life in the Kolhatkar home an air of timelessness.

[1] His son Samihan, thirty years of age, has, as of January 2004, also completed his vedic training at Ved Bhavan, a traditional *pāṭhaśāḷā* on the outskirts of Pune. One of the youngest in India to be granted the status of *ghanapāṭhī*, Samihan actively travels throughout the region to participate in Vedic *yajñas* and *svāhākārs*, and, it ought to be said, has by 2004 become more of an expert in the Vedas than his father—in casual conversation in their home, Vaman-*kākā* regularly (and with pride) deferred to his son's authority. Samihan is currently studying the musical recitation of the *Sāma Veda*, and assures me that the *Yajur Veda* is next (Samihan Kolhatkar, personal communication, January 2004).

At the same time, Vaman-*kākā* left his traditional Vedic schooling to enter public college in the 1960s, eventually earned a master's degree in mathematics, traveled through Europe, and resided in the United States as a visiting scholar at Purdue University in 1981-1982. Currently, for his livelihood, he runs a physics laboratory for high school students—named Gaṇit Mandir, (Temple of Mathematics)—in the front rooms of his home. And so, upon entering his otherwise simple home, the visitor is confronted with scientific instruments, flocks of teenagers buzzing about in t-shirts and designer jeans, and quite often one of the Kolhatkar children studying computer programming or checking email on their Pentium computer.[2] I am convinced that it is the intensity with which this juxtaposition of tradition and modernity takes place in Kolhatkar's home—a perfect mapping perhaps of the turbulent confluence of Indianness and Americanness in my own identity—that has continually drawn me there, and that has compelled me to centralize his *kīrtan* performances in this dissertation.

In Vaman-*kākā*'s house are located both the warmest and most traumatic memories of my childhood visits to India. The warm memories were of the tremendous hospitality and love that Vaman-*kākā* and *kākū* had given me and my family, hours of play with their five children (all more or less my age), and the colorful and charming stories he told. The traumatic memories were of the voracious mosquitoes from the garden feasting on my American blood, and of Vaman-*kākā's* temper, which manifested itself in one rather striking incident when I was nine. Because of some misdemeanor, now long-forgotten, an irate *kākā* had given me a stern lecture, picked me up, and thrown me,

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[2] On a return visit in November 2003, I was surprised, but perhaps not astonished, to find two new courses being taught in the Kolhatkar home (by outside instructors): electronics and Japanese.

crying and screaming, into the water tank (*haud*). It was not without trepidation, therefore, that I again visited the Kolhatkar home as a doctoral student—though the mosquitoes promptly resumed their feast, thankfully I committed no *haud*-worthy crimes as an adult.

This all became a routine for me in the spring of 1998: reading the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the morning, the occasional conversation with the Kolhatkars in the afternoon, and daily *tabla* lessons in the evening. Eventually, in the month of April, midway through the *Bālakāṇḍa*, I encountered an interconnected series of subnarratives about the legendary sage Viśvāmitra. I was already familiar with Viśvāmitra's role in the primary narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as the quick-tempered sage who arrives in the court of King Daśaratha to demand the services of his untested, teenage sons Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in protecting his Vedic sacrifice from *rākṣasas* (demons). However, this was the first time I had encountered the stories of Viśvāmitra's self-transformation from Kṣatriya to Brahman *varṇa*, or Viśvāmitra's forceful uplifting of the cursed king Triśaṅku into heaven. There were also the stories of Viśvāmitra's compassionate rescue of the Brahman boy Śunaḥśepa, sold to be a king's human sacrifice, Viśvāmitra's affair with the *apsaras* Menakā, and Viśvāmitra's curse of the *apsaras* Rambhā. Here were a set of stories—consciously and artistically woven into Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* in the early centuries of the Common Era but not found in the vast majority of its later Sanskrit and vernacular, literary and folk versions—that seemed to raise, in my mind at least, inescapable and probing questions about the limits of caste.

> I was fascinated, and during one visit with Vaman-*kākā*, as we were relazing on the stately, wood-and-wrought-iron swing in his courtyard, I mentioned what I had been reading. "Ah yes," he remarked, "These stories are very good! But they

> are very old and very complicated." He then started telling me all of the stories of Viśvāmitra, beginning with his birth, in such an enchanting and engaging style that slowly his wife, his son and daughters had all gathered around to listen, until I realized it had grown dark, dinnertime had passed, and I was not going to make it to *tabla* lessons that night. He skillfully wove together all of the stories I had read in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, along with other Viśvāmitra stories he had known, as only an active bearer could possibly do. Over a late dinner, we continued our conversation; I was particularly intrigued about stories that he had told me that were not in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, including the legend of Hariścandra. "Where are all these stories found?" I asked, "Are they in the Vedas?" "Oh they are everywhere, in the Vedas, the *Mahābhārata*, and all of them are in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*. But they also exist orally, and we tell them in *kīrtan*."

At the time, though his mention of *kīrtan* would only leave a vague impression in my mind, I was struck by the amalgam of Sanskrit texts, structuralism, and orality that had taken place that night. Not only had Kolhatkar brought to life a cycle of stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, he had synthesized these narratives, in a meaningful way, with others from Sanskrit literature, and as we gently rocked back and forth on the swing, while the mosquitoes feasted, he presented them to me as a unified, coherent 'tradition'—a cycle of narratives that for me spoke most powerfully about one issue: caste. The seeds of a dissertation had been sown.

In the years since this event, I have come to realize that the interactions between texts, structures, and performances are central to what we think of as 'culture,' and that the oral event in which I had participated on that spring evening had been a construction of a space, both physical and intellectual, in which an honest structural inquiry (my questions about caste) was met by Kolhatkar's authoritative, living voice of tradition, a voice granted authority through his prudent and learned reading of (dead) Sanskrit texts as well as his social status. As an active but critical bearer of an increasingly obscure set of traditions—purāṇic, śāstraic, Vedic—it struck me that Kolhatkar, and others like him, play a crucial role in the impact of Sanskrit texts on the cultural lives of contemporary

Indians, and I began to ponder the significance of *kīrtan*, the public, formalized performance of the same stories he had told to me in the privacy of his courtyard. I wanted to know precisely how written Sanskrit texts, and the variation among them, influenced the seemingly free-flowing, oral world of devotional storytelling that characterizes the Marathi *bhakti* practice of *nāradīya kīrtan*; at the same time, I was eager to find out how the structures of caste, and the challenges to caste that Viśvāmitra represented, became interpreted within this often politically-charged religious performance tradition. It was therefore with these sets of questions in mind—the intertextuality of Sanskrit texts of the Viśvāmitra cycle, their reception and performance by the *kīrtankār*, and the construction (and deconstruction) of caste through the mechanics of narratives—that I returned to Pune in the fall of 2000 for an extended period of research.

The results of that research constitute this dissertation. The rest of this introduction will present the theoretical background within which I conducted this research, and provide an itinerary of sorts for the dissertation as a whole. This is a literary study of a set of epic and purāṇic subnarratives, but is at the same time a folkloristic analysis of their contemporary performance, in an effort to understand the embedding of epic and purāṇic subnarratives as 'textual performances.' I will therefore employ a structural approach to understand the relationships between individual versions, but a hermeneutic approach to understand how their meaning is generated through performances. In order to situate these lines of inquiry within particular academic discourses, and before turning to the analysis of the actual Viśvāmitra legends in the bulk of the dissertation, this introduction will first examine how we may study the

intertextuality of Viśvāmitra in Sanskrit literature, second, how we may approach storytelling performances like *naradiya kīrtan* and how we may think of Brahmans as a folk group, and finally, how we may theorize a multiplicity of caste through literary concepts of representation.

I. Towards a postmodern Indology?: Intertextuality in epic and purāṇic literature

In the thirteenth book of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*,[3] the prince Yudhiṣṭhira, eldest of the victorious Pāṇdava brothers, while listening to a protracted discourse on kingship, religion, and history from his dying patriarch Bhīṣma, asks a question about the sage Viśvāmitra.

> Your Highness, if Brahmanhood is so difficult to attain by members of the other three *varṇas*, then how did the mighty Kṣatriya, righteous Viśvāmitra, attain it, powerful King? I wish to hear this in detail—please tell me, grandfather. (*Mbh* 13.3.1-2)

Before Bhīṣma can answer, Yudhiṣṭhira goes on to give a succinct account of this sage's exploits:

> Grandfather, please tell me how that man of immeasurable valor slew the hundred sons of Vasiṣṭha, entirely through his *tapas* (ascetic power); how, appearing like the end of Time, he created violent *yātudhānas* and *rākṣasas* (demons), his body enveloped in hostility.
>
> Tell me how, lauded as a Brahman, the wise one went on to establish the great Kuśika lineage in this world, thronging with hundreds of *brahmarṣis* (Brahman-sages).
>
> Tell me how Ṛcīka's son, the great ascetic Śunaḥśepa, was released from the great sacrificial ritual in which he had been placed as a victim,

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[3] All references in this dissertation to the primary Sanskrit texts of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, unless otherwise noted, will be to their respective (Poona and Baroda) critical editions.

> And how, during Hariścandra's sacrifice, by gratifying the gods with his majesty, he became the son of great Viśvāmitra;
>
> How, when they did not assent to Devarāta being the eldest, your Majesty, his five hundred sons were summarily cursed to be Śvapacas [dog-cooker outcastes].
>
> Tell me how Triśaṅku, the Īkṣvāku, though forsaken by his peers, was gladly led into heaven, upside-down, and placed in the southern direction.
>
> Tell me how Viśvāmitra's broad river, the Kauśikī, is frequented by *rājarṣis* [royal sages], blessed and auspicious, and attended to by throngs of *brahmarṣis* [Brahman sages].
>
> Tell me how the esteemed *apsaras* [celestial nymph] named Rambhā, having five ornaments, acted as an obstacle to his *tapas*, and due to his curse was turned to stone.
>
> Tell me also how long ago, overcome with fear of him, Vasiṣṭha, tying himself up, drowned himself in the waters, but was raised back out, unbound, and how, from that time on, the great river Vipāśā became holy, made illustrious by the deeds of that great Vasiṣṭha.
>
> Tell me how he praised the lord Skanda, the leader of the gods' armies, and how, gratified, he released him from a curse.
>
> He shines eternally amongst the *brahmarṣis* (the constellation of the Seers) revolving around the pole star Dhruva, fixed in the northern sky.
>
> Kaurava, I am highly intrigued by all of these and other exploits of this Kṣatriya;
>
> Please tell me in detail how this came to be, powerful Bhārata: how did he become a Brahman without taking on another body? (*Mbh* 13.3.3-17)

Ironically, Bhīṣma will never tell Yudhiṣṭhira any of these stories, all of which together may be said to constitute an epic and purāṇic 'Viśvāmitra cycle.' Instead, he will respond with just one legend (*MBh* 13.4)—the well-known story of his sister Satyavatī, which details the mix-up leading to both the birth of the Brahman-like Kṣatriya Viśvāmitra and the Kṣatriya-like Brahman Paraśurāma. Nonetheless, Yudhiṣṭhira's inquiry makes it apparent that since at least the early centuries of the Common Era, when

this dialogue became a part of the *Mahābhārata*, the stories of Viśvāmitra's exploits have stood for a serious breach of *varṇa* boundaries. Though he may or may not have been the first to ask how a Kṣatriya could become a Brahman, Yudhiṣṭhira was by no means the last, and a larger task of this dissertation is to uncover a series of voices—ancient and modern, indigenous and foreign—that have dealt with this same question.

The stories of Viśvāmitra have drawn considerable attention in the academic study of Sanskrit literature.[4] Among the early Indologists, it was the landmark social history of John Muir (1810-1882) that seems to have definitively tied Viśvāmitra to *varṇa* (Muir 1868).[5] Perhaps more than any other Sanskritist, Muir made it the task and privilege of the Indologist to decipher the 'original' Sanskrit texts and to reconstruct the ancient society they reflected. Muir argued that the Viśvāmitra cycle reflected a shift in ancient Indian social and political structures in which a system of *varṇa* that was fluid in the Vedic period was transformed into the watertight compartments we find today:

> If we find that later works consider it necessary to represent [Viśvāmitra's] priestly character as a purely exceptional one, explicable only on the ground of supernatural merit acquired by ardent devotion, we must recollect that the course of the ages had brought about a most material change in Indian society, that the sacerdotal function had at length become confined to the members of an exclusive caste, and that the exercise of such an office in ancient times by persons of the regal and mercantile classes had ceased to be intelligible, except upon the

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[4] Scholarly approaches to Viśvāmitra in Sanskrit literature have generally fallen under vedic or epic and purāṇic studies. For bibliographies of vedic and epic and purāṇic studies, see Dandekar 1946-1993, Aithal 1993, von Stietencron 1992. For a basic introduction to epic studies, see Brockington 1998; for purāṇic studies, see Rocher 1986.

[5] The first European analyses of the narratives and characterization of Viśvāmitra were largely motivated by an interest in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa's* Śunaḥśepa legend (*AB* 7.14-18). The discussions of Rudolf Roth (1821-1895), Freidrich Max Müller (1823-1900), and Albrecht Weber (1825-1901) concerned the status of human sacrifice in vedic culture (Roth 1846 and 1850, Müller 1860, Weber 1854). Nicholas Dirks has forcefully argued (Dirks 1989, Dirks 1992, Dirks 2001), it was during the initial phase of British colonial inquiry into the social and cultural framework of ancient India that the concept of caste, as we now know it, assumed its crystalline and all-encompassing manifestation; a closer look at Muir suggests that his study of Viśvāmitra has played no small part in this colonial construction.

supposition of such extraordinary sanctity as was alleged in the case of Viśvāmitra. (Muir 1868, 363)

Complementing Müller's approach to Vedic mythology, Muir's model of literary devolution from accurate Vedic history into fantasy-ridden purāṇic legend became seminal to the next generation of scholars to tackle the epics and *purāṇas*, including the influential work of Arthur Berriedale Keith (1879-1944).[6] Keith advocated a project of historical reconstruction that privileged vedic texts over epic and purāṇic sources, while an alternative came from Frederick Eden Pargiter (1852-1927), who developed a radical theory of literary appropriation in which the Brahmanic religious tradition assumed control over the epics and *purāṇas* emergent from an earlier, exclusively Kṣatriya—and secular—historical tradition that was distorted and retold from a dehistoricized and self-serving Brahmanic point of view (Pargiter 1913, 1917, 1922).[7]

Indological studies of Viśvāmitra after the Second World War were for the most part grounded in the philological assumptions of either Keith or Pargiter.[8] We must note, however, that a thematic shift took place in their academic orientation. A majority of these articles and monographs, appearing primarily in Indian academic circles, reconstructed almost hagiographical life-histories of the *ṛṣi* Viśvāmitra,[9] often tinted with

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[6] See Rocher 1986, especially section 1.2.1, "The *Purāṇas* and the Veda," for a trace of this scholarship with respect to the *purāṇas*.

[7] As Kunal Chakrabarty has pointed out, Pargiter's work "treated the Purāṇic material with a respect previously unheard of," and strove to construct a model of ancient Indian history that went beyond exclusively Vedic materials (Chakrabarti 2001, 4), though it was not free of the creative speculation involved in the early Indological project of separating the historical 'wheat' from the mythological 'chaff.'

[8] Important works include Narahari 1941, Hariyappa 1953, Rahurkar 1964, Lommel 1965-1966, Kapadia 1971, Sharma 1975, Chaubey 1987.

[9] Unlike Muir and Pargiter, scholars like H. L Hariyappa, V. G. Rahurkar, and U. C. Sharma, motivated by the contemporary milieu of a newly independent India, envisioned an ancient past in which the boundaries between Brahman and Kṣatriya were interpreted not as lines of conflict but lines of harmony. Thus, B. H. Kapadia confidently declared that there was no rivalry between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha in the Vedic period, "which could result in hatred between clans and races" (Kapadia 1971, 100).

a romantic interest in placing Viśvāmitra in a mythic-historic 'golden age' of Aryan kings and Vedic culture.[10] Western studies of Viśvāmitra during this time took a turn towards either structuralism or psychoanalysis to explain how Viśvāmitra 'worked' (Goldman 1978, O'Flaherty 1984, Shulman 1985, Hara 1975).

Though allusions and references to Viśvāmitra abound, and analyses of individual legends appear in many works, it is rare to find sustained, theoretical analyses of this cycle of narratives. In a notable attempt to transcend simple historical speculation, David Gordon White (White 1992) hypothesized a post-Upaniṣadic historical period in which the stories of Viśvāmitra came to represent a type of heterodox Brahmanic authority not previously accepted, indicating changing notions of caste and religiosity.[11]

Though disparate in methodology, the most obvious thread that has bound this parade of scholarship to Yudhiṣṭhira's initial query in the *Mahābhārata* is the question of *varṇa*. After all, how *can* a Kṣatriya really become a Brahman? It is precisely the

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[10] Hariyappa, for example, found the Śunaḥśepa legend to be "a protest against human sacrifice which the Aryans found prevalent in the land, when they arrived from the north-western regions" (Hariyappa 1953, 240). Rahurkar, in a notable study of the major seers of the *Ṛg Veda*, aimed to provide 'historical biographies' of all of these seers, with the aim of "presenting systematically, though in some cases only in broad outlines, the significant role played by those *ṛṣis* in the social, political, religious, ritualistic, philosophical and literary history of ancient India" (Rahurkar 1964, ii). His chapter on Viśvāmitra focused largely on a detailed reconstruction of Viśvāmitra's vedic life, and paid little serious regard to epic and purāṇic texts in this matter, which were "to be regarded as the outcome of the manifold attempts made by the Paurāṇikas to build up mythological superstructures on the basis of a historical event belonging to the Vedic age, the real signification of which, however, must have more or less been completely forgotten in the meantime" (Rahurkar 1964, 32). Sharma's 'constructive survey,' perhaps the most voluminous of these efforts, tried "to reconstruct a detailed history of the families of two Rgvedic seers, namely Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha" (Sharma 1975, 3). Critical of existing Viśvāmitra studies, Sharma felt that "scholars have overlooked the value of the study of the epics and the *purāṇas* in connection with the study of the Vedas" (Sharma 1975, 1), and sought to correct this by more meticulous analysis. However, by the end of his study, Sharma managed to dismiss nearly every epic and purāṇic narrative of Viśvāmitra as "imaginary and far from reality" (28), "a heterogenous mixture" (94), containing "very little material which is historically credible" (93), or as in the case of the Cyavana-Kuśika dialogue (*MBh* 13.52-56), just plain "wrong" (30).

[11] White has written that "Viśvāmitra stands as the historical mediator between the earlier anti-brahmanic *vrātyas* ('vow-takers') and *yatis* ('goers'), and the later tantric sects. In this light, these myths and other sources are also chronicles of a changing relationship between sanctioned brahmanic authority and unsanctioned non-Brahman renunciant power" (White 1992, 55).

violation this *varṇa* boundary that makes the Viśvāmitra narratives so compelling, and produces so many variants scattered throughout the epics and *purāṇas*. While most scholars have attempted to answer this question through models of historical or ideological change, in which *varṇa* congealed and crystallized into today's caste system, this dissertation does not strive to answer the question of *varṇa* change but to understand how the composers and performers of these stories have dealt with it. I suggest that it is the narrative itself (i.e., the plot, setting, and characters of the story) that raises the questions, while it is the performance that answers them. Insofar as it highlights the plurality of the text, this dissertation follows a poststructural turn of Sanskrit studies that is concerned with the active relationships of texts and historical contexts and with situating literary works within meaningful sociopolitical and religious spheres.

Perhaps more forcefully than any other scholar, Ronald Inden has problematized the 'authorist' and 'contextualist' tendencies of Indology, arguing that epic and purāṇic texts are produced through a dialogic process between complex agents (Inden 2000c).[12] Though it remains unclear if one is consistently able to analyze this historical process without resorting to philological reconstructive surgery or structuralist reductionism, the value of Inden's approach is that an individual purāṇic text is characterized by its relationships to other texts.[13] It must be understood that a particular epic or *purāṇa* could

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[12] Simply put, Inden critiques the conceptualization of the Sanskrit text, and particularly the *purāṇa*, as a monological artifact of history, and instead urges for more sophisticated, dialogic readings of the *purāṇas* as 'scales of texts,' using terminology inspired by the English philosopher R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943). Rather than prepackaged artifacts of social and religious systems, for Inden the *purāṇas* become articulative of competing sets of theological and political interests, understandable through the historical context of their production.

[13] While his technique works quite well for smaller and more recently composed *purāṇas* for which we are able to pinpoint a text-history, e.g., Inden's *Visnudharmottara Purāṇa*, this sort of 'New Historicist' reading of the mammoth and widely dispersed '*mahāpurāṇas*' or the two epics proves much more difficult, even with the "informed speculation" (Inden 2000b, 14) that Inden allows.

not, and did not, ever stand alone—the epics and *purāṇas* were always read in the context of other texts and in the midst of other practices. And they still are today. Moreover, these linkages between texts cannot be understood as mere cut-and-paste quotations, plagiarisms or allusions, but as dialogues between texts. One of the tasks of this dissertation is to investigate the extent to which these linkages between texts are demonstrated through the subnarratives (*upakathās*) that these texts share.[14]

I have chosen to begin with Yudhiṣṭhira's query to Bhīṣma in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* because it quite succinctly illustrates how one narrative (the legend of Satyavatī) is embedded into an epic and purāṇic text in order to 'answer' the discursive questions provoked by a series of other narratives—in this case, regarding the permeability of *varṇa*. Labeling it a 'purāṇic process,' Friedhelm Hardy has described this question-and-answer relationship as a "historical process of transmitting and imposing meaning from the past into the present" (Hardy 1993, 181) relying on other, presupposed texts—oral, purāṇic, śāstraic, vedic—to provide the authoritative basis for this transmission.[15] These usages of texts, which I will term 'textual performances,' suggest a dynamic nature of epic and purāṇic authorship that is quite different from the stiff, lifeless philological model of textual transmission (see Bonazzoli 1979, Bonazzoli 1983a, Doniger 1991, Rocher 1994), or equally problematic concepts of unchanging, mythic 'imagination.' To understand how the subnarratives of Viśvāmitra construct counter-normative spaces, this

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[14] Important work has in fact been done on *upakathā* traditions in the epics and *purāṇas*, but it is scanty and, for the most part, not analytic. Goldman 1977 is a thorough analysis of the Bhārgava cycle of myths in the *Mahābhārata*; similarly, Barbara Gombach's dissertation (2000) is a comprehensive catalog of the *upakathas* that are found in the *Mahābhārata*. Work on the *Rāmāyaṇa upakathās*, aside from the aforementioned Viśvāmitra studies, seems to be less thorough. For the *purāṇas*, there seems to be even less consideration of the role of subnarratives within the larger works.

[15] Hardy's 'purāṇic process' is quite distinct from Chakrabarti's post-marxist discussions of a religious 'purāṇic process' of ideological assimilation (Chakrabarti 2001), though they both concern cultural expansions through texts.

dissertation employs an intertextual approach to the problems of epic and purāṇic textual transmission.

Greg Bailey, in a thought-provoking article, has urged a deeper consideration of intertextuality in the study of epic and purāṇic literature (Bailey 1999). Though he begins with a conservative, textualist premise—that "the text-historical approach could be used to identify intertexts and by comparing contents of intertext and target text the change in meaning resulting from intertextuality could be ascertained," (Bailey 1999, 196), he arrives at a much deeper problem—how to reconcile the seemingly synchronic nature of the intertextual approach with the diachronic, philological foundations of Indology. One of the reasons for his dilemma is undoubtedly the nature of intertextuality scholarship itself: the history of this field seems almost as resistant to description as the concept itself. Coined in 1966 by the French literary scholar Julia Kristeva (1941-), the term *intertextuality* has taken on a trendy life of its own.[16] There seems to be no precise disciplinary direction, no basic agreement as to the methods and ambitions of intertextual inquiry, apart from the basic focus on the plurality of a text during its production and reception.[17]

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[16] The trendiness (and imprecision) of this term is evidenced by the staggering amount of (often-contradictory) introductions and bibliographies composed in less then forty years. For bibliographical reviews of intertextuality scholarship, see Perri 1979, Bruce 1983, Hebel 1989, Mai 1991b. Good introductions to the field include Plottel and Charney 1978, Rusinko 1979, Morgan 1985, Worton and Still 1990, Plett 1991, Orr 2003.

[17] Thus, while a deconstructive analysis might insist that "all contexts, whether political, economic, social, psychological, historical, or theological become intertexts" (Leitch 1983, 122, quoted in Mai 1991a, 31), text-centric scholars such as Robert Schoeck safely assure us that "a Text does possess a plurality of meanings, but one cannot argue from that conclusion to the proposition that the Text itself is necessarily plural" (Schoeck 1984). We also notice a problem of generic limitations—while the poetician Michael Riffaterre includes practically any relationship between texts under the heading of 'intertext' (Riffaterre 1980), the literary scholar Gérard Genette restricts the term to purely mechanical connections between texts—allusions, quotations, and plagiarisms (Genette 1997).

Kristeva's neologism, influenced by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), appeared amidst the 'Tel Quel' circle of French literary criticism of the early 1960s, during an intellectual moment of fracture that came to be known as 'post-structural.' It began with a politically charged reformulation of the concept of the 'text,' which for them "no longer only a superstructural epiphenomenon but, if wielded correctly, a basic ideological weapon which can contribute directly to a revolutionary change in society" (Mai 1991a, 37). For this reason, Kristeva viewed the 'text' as a *productivity*, meaning "first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (destructive-constructive)... and second, that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva 1980, 36, quoted in Mai 1991a, 40). Declaring the "Death of the Author," Roland Barthes (1915-1980) relocated the site of Kristeva's intertextuality in its interpretation by the reader, the 'inter-text.'[18] More conservative literary scholars such as Genette and Riffaterre have attempted to control this explosive notion of intertextuality by categorizing it, inventing a cornucopia of terms to describe every possible formal relationship of text to (earlier) text (Genette 1997, Riffaterre 1978). However, lest we lose the revolutionary force of Kristeva's concept of 'intertextuality,' we should understand that these diachronic borrowings, references, and influences necessarily coexist with an equally significant, synchronic moment of disorder, a non-structure giving the reader the promise of infinite interpretation. It is in this moment of reception that the author's text enters the reader's control, and it is in this

[18] Thus, as Jonathan Culler explains, "Barthes speaks of intertextual codes as a 'mirage of citations,' likely to prove evasive and insubstantial as soon as one attempts to grasp them. The codes are nothing other than the 'déjà lu,' and the readers, in whom these codes dwell, may be thought of as the representatives of a general intertextuality" (Culler 2002, 102).

cultural space that there is always a danger (or perhaps, the opportunity) that the message that the 'dead' author wishes to send through the text may become subverted, challenged, negotiated.

The exposition of this subversive moment within the Viśvāmitra cycle has become the central objective of this dissertation. When I began my research, I had hoped that narrative multiplicity could be neatly correlated with a multiplicity of voice, and hence, a multiplicity of caste. That is, my hypothesis was that different versions ought to point to different ideologies. While in some cases a one-to-one correlation between text, voice, and discourse does emerge in the Viśvāmitra legends, this dissertation finds that in ancient, medieval, and contemporary articulations of traditional narratives, the situation is considerably more complex. For in a traditional Indian milieu, the recognition of the unstructured interpretive moment mandates the presence of a Bhīṣma: a commentator, a narrator, a performer. In other words, while the 'original' author may indeed be dead and buried in the intertext, his readers are not quite free to pick through his grave, for there is always a very much alive-and-well performer assigned to guard the intertextual crypt. Perhaps more than authorial intention or reader-response, therefore, it is the voices of these ancient, medieval, and contemporary crypt-keepers—composers, re-tellers, commentators, bards, *paurāṇiks*, *kīrtankārs*—for whom epic and purāṇic texts function as 'vehicles of ideology.'

A theory of intertextuality, thus modified, holds great promise in furthering our understanding of the production and reproduction of epic and purāṇic texts. A. K. Ramanujan was perhaps the first to explore intertextuality in South Asian cultural forms seriously, building on Barthes's work to speak of an "ecological array" of genres,

consisting of “folktales and folk-myths, texts in mother tongues and in Sanskrit (and other father-tongues), oral and written in their fixed and fluid forms (for both oral and written have both) and so on. Furthermore,” argues Ramanujan, “motifs, structures, and whole narratives may move through different genres and acquire different properties and meanings according to the ambience of each genre” (Ramanujan 1999, 517, reprint of Ramanujan 1990). Though never rigorous in describing it, Ramanujan points out that these movements are diachronic—in an earlier essay, he outlines the threefold process of reflexivity at work in Indian literary texts:

> (1) *Responsive*, where text A responds to text B in ways that define both A and B; (2) *reflexive*, where text A reflects on text B, relates itself to it directly or inversely; (3) *self-reflexive*, where a text reflects on itself or its own kind. The parts or texts in relation 1 may be called co-texts, in 2, countertexts, and in 3, metatexts. (Ramanujan 1999, 8, reprint of Ramanujan 1989)

Behind Ramanujan’s usage of ‘response’ or ‘reflection’ lies an understanding that text B is composed before text A; in the same breath, however, Ramanujan warns that for native commentators and readers, “texts do not come in historical stages but form ‘a simultaneous order,’ where every new text within a series confirms yet alters the whole order ever so slightly, and not always so slightly” (Ramanujan 1999, 8, reprint of Ramanujan 1989). What we are left with then, is to engage in a history of intertextualities.

In yet another highly suggestive, fleeting moment, Ramanujan has suggested that this intertextuality be envisioned as a “transitive series, a ‘scale of forms’... responding to one another, engaged in continuous and dynamic dialogic relations” (Ramanujan 1999, 535, reprint of Ramanujan 1990). Inden, along with co-writers Jonathan Walters and Daud Ali, take up Collingwood’s “scale of forms” (Collingwood 1983) in more rigorous

and systematic ways, proposing to view the *purāṇas* as "scales of texts" (Inden 2000b, 42). For these and other scholars who have approached Sanskrit texts as articulative within their historical moment (Pollock 2001, Hiltebeitel 2001), intertextuality is intrinsic to the production of an epic and purāṇic text. "A text," Inden urges, "is not created *ex nihilo* but from heterogenous and overlapping portions of other texts" (Inden 2000b, 50). In this type of intertextual model, the author, envisioned as a complex agent, is no longer a passive "conduit" as Bailey fears (Bailey 1999, 185), and engages in a negotiative "purāṇic process" of text production. When entire epic and purāṇic texts are grounded within social, political, and religious historical 'moments' and 'movements,' the resulting picture of textual production maintains the sociopolitical complexities and purposes of epic and purāṇic composers and audiences in ancient or medieval India. I suggest that we may do the same for their performers.

Keeping in mind the openness of text and discourse that Kristeva and Barthes first located in intertextuality, this dissertation will take the view that embedding of the same (Viśvāmitra) subnarrative within different epic and purāṇic texts not only creates intertextualities between itself and earlier textual performances, but also induces interdiscursivities through which epics and *purāṇas* address the structural questions of the legends with specific religious and sociopolitical discourses that the texts are trying to promote. Essential to this approach is a theorization of performance that will help us make this 'leap of faith' between texts and discourses.

II. The performance of nāradīya kīrtan and the concept of a 'Brahman folk'

This dissertation engages in an interdisciplinarity not unlike John Niles's exposition of *Homo Narrans* and the orality of *Beowulf* (Niles 1999), Philip Lutgendorf's analysis of oral traditions around Tulsīdās (Lutgendorf 1991), Alf Hiltebeitel's study of ritual and epic structure (Hiltebeitel 1986), or the 'formulaic' theorization of oral literature, from Milman Parry and Albert Lord (Lord 2000) to Walter Ong (Ong 2002) and John Miles Foley (Foley 1986; see also Foley 1985). I will, however, place less emphasis on questions of oral vs. written composition and transmission that have been taken up by a number of scholars in favor of understanding texts as performances. Such a focus invokes a methodology developed in the early 1970s by a new group of folklorists, linguists, sociologists and anthropologists, whom the eminent "graybeard" Richard Dorson at the time termed the "Young Turks" (Dorson 1972, 45, quoted in Zumwalt 1988, 139), and who embarked on a paradigmatic shift in the discipline of folkloristics epitomized by their interest in understanding "verbal art as performance."

Modern folkloristics may be said to have roots in the work of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who envisioned Germanic national heritage in the traditions of "*das Volk*." More influential to South Asia were the British anthropologists Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) who imagined folklore as "survivals" of primitive culture (as practiced by contemporary "savage" cultures) amidst civilized Europe, and James George Frazer (1854-1941), who mapped the evolution of cultural thought from magic to religion

to science.[19] The study of folklore in the nineteenth century was driven by an evolutionist *zeitgeist*; by the turn of the twentieth century, theories of genesis and diffusion matured into what came to be known as the Finnish (historic-geographic) method, and its first decade saw the publication of tale-type and motif indices for a wide variety of Indo-European and non-Indo-European folklore genres. In the century to follow, structural, psychoanalytic, marxist, and other theories of cultural production were also brought to bear on the content of folklore, but until the emergence of a theory of performance, scant attention had been paid to issues of context.[20]

Performance theorists began with the realization that most folklore, as it has been recorded by folklorists, bears little resemblance to how it is actually uttered. This was not simply an issue of Bowdlerization or "fakelore"—the idea is that non-textual elements (what Alan Dundes has termed "texture" [Dundes 1964]) are just as essential to an event of folklore as the text.[21] Three significant results of performance theory have revolutionized the ways in which we look at folklore. First, performance theorists are interested in the "breakthrough into performance"—the moment in which ordinary speech stops being ordinary and becomes performance (Hymes); such moments are signalled by "keys." Second, performance involves textual and ideological negotiation—interactions between performer, audience, and text that take place during any folkloric event. Third, performance involves constructions of identity and reflexivity through which the

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[19] For a thorough discussion of the history of folklore scholarship in Europe, see Cocchiara 1981, Dundes 1999. For more on the impact of British folklorists on India, see Dorson 1968, Naithani 2001, Naithani 2002, Prasad 2003.

[20] For introductions to the performance-oriented folkloristics, see Toelken 1996,117-156.

[21] Often resulting in elaborate and rather unwieldy transcriptions replete with symbols, breaks, and codes, the performance-oriented recording techniques of Dennis Tedlock (Tedlock 1972) and others have sought to integrate as much of the performance as possible.

performer and audience relate to themselves and to one another, strengthening (or weakening) the bond of folk groups. This dissertation will take up precisely these sites of theorization to study how Viśvāmitra narratives have been performed in Marathi *nāradīya kīrtan*.

The devotional performance tradition known as *kīrtan* (or *harikathā*) in Maharashtra is found in various forms all over North and South India, and may be characterized as a genre of organized *bhakti* expression encouraging musicality, performance, and communion with the divine.[22] As a pan-Indian folk genre of religious expression, *kīrtan* demonstrates a great amount of regional and linguistic variation. Anna Schultz, building off the work of Yashwant Pathak, has provided a valuable survey of *kīrtan* in India by dividing *kīrtan* into its scholarly categorizations of *nāma-saṅkīrtan* (glorifying the name of God), *līlā-saṅkīrtan* (glorifying the play of God), and *guṇa-saṅkīrtan* (glorifying the qualities of God) (Schultz 2004, 65-76, Pathak 1980, 14-15). Though rightly unsatisfied with the generic applicability of these labels, (Schultz 2004, 65-66), Schultz productively uses this scheme to organize the regional varieties of *kīrtan* across the subcontinent. The communal, chanted, and emotionally intense nature of *nāma-saṅkīrtan* is highlighted in Benarasi, Bhojpuri and Bengali *kīrtan* traditions, as well as frenzied Marathi *bhajan* and *gajar* traditions. The *guṇa-saṅkīrtan* focus on devotional poetry is essential to Benarasi or Braj *kīrtan*, Kannada *kīrtana* or *kīrti*, as well as Sikh *kīrtan* traditions. The idea of *līlā-saṅkīrtan* emerges in the narrativity of Marathi *kīrtan*, Bengali *padāvalī kīrtan*, Tamil and Telugu *kathākālakṣepam* and *bhāgavatar* traditions.

[22] Though '*kīrtana*' appears as one of the nine forms of *bhakti* in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, it seems unlikely that the performance genre as we witness it today in Maharashtra achieved its formal nature before the medieval period. Earlier textual accounts of *kīrtan*, aside from reaffirming its basic meaning of 'praise' or 'extolment,' do not seem to indicate elaborate performance.

In Maharashtra, however, *kīrtan* is generally divided by performance tradition or *sampradāya*, of which there are two major divisions: *nāradīya* and *vārkarī*. Though within these there are several secondary *sampradāyas* (*rāmdāsī*, *rāṣṭrīya*, *Gadge Mahārājī*), for the interests of the present study, the two branches sufficiently account for formal variation among the performances that style themselves as *kīrtan*. Contemplating of Maharashtra as a folklore region, we find that *kīrtan* coexists with several other genres of devotional performance: *paurāṇik/vaiyāsik* recitation, *pravacan*, *bhajan*, and *bhāruḍ*. The emphasis in *kīrtan* on Vaiśnava *bhakti* distinguishes it from the more 'secular' or non-Vaiśnava performance tradition *bhāruḍ*, *kīrtan's* orality distinguishes it from *purāṇic* recitation, and the intermixture of music, poetry, and sermon distinguishes *kīrtan* from the straightforward exegetical tradition of *pravacan*, or the fully musical form of *bhajan*.

The differences between *nāradīya* and *vārkarī kīrtan* may be examined through four categories: origin, form, content, and context. While *vārkarī kīrtankārs* (performers of *kīrtan*) trace the origin of their *sampradāya* to the *sant* (poet-saint) Nāmdev (1270-1350), *nāradīya kīrtan* places its origins in the mythological *devarṣi* (divine sage) Nārada.[23] *Kīrtankārs* and scholars have often reconstructed the primordial *kīrtan* performance as described in a verse attributed to the *Bhāgavata* or *Padma Purāṇas* (though probably apocryphal):

> *prahlādas tāladhārī taralagatitatyā ca uddhavaḥ kāṁsyadhārī* |
> *vīṇādhārī surarṣiḥ svarakuśalatayā rāgakartā arjuno 'bhūt* |
> *indro 'vādīn mṛdaṅgaṁ jayajayasukarāḥ kīrtane te kumārāḥ* |
> *yatrāgre bhāvavaktā sarasaracatayā vyāsaputro babhūva* ‖

[23] See Ranade 1984, 121. Ranade further mentions that Nāmdev's open-air *kīrtans* at Pandharpur before the god Viṭṭhal were transformed into the contemporary *vārkarī* form largely due to Pandit Vishnubuwa Jog (1867-1920) or Pandit Bhausaheb Katkar Maharaj (1813-1878) (Ranade 1984, 121-122; see also Pathak 1980, 79, Koparkar 1977, appendix 5: 54)

> Prahlad played the *tāla* [cymbals], while Uddhava played the *kāṁsya* in rapid pace; Nārada, the divine *ṛṣi*, played the *vīṇā* [lute], while Arjuna fashioned the *rāgas* [melodic scales] with melodic prowess. Indra played the *mṛdaṅga* [drum] while the *jayjaykārs* [calls of praise] were by Sanatkumār. During the *kīrtan*, Śuka, son of Vyāsa, stood ahead of them, an orator of emotions arising through his *rasa*-filled compositions. (Koparkar 1977, Pathak 1980, Ranade 1984)

Despite these and other purāṇic verses ascribing ancient origins for *nāradīya kīrtan*, it is more likely that the *nāradīya* tradition underwent significant development through the work of Eknāth (1548-1599), who seems to have formalized its structure, and Rāmdās (1608-1681), during whose time *kīrtan* received court patronage and who brought *kīrtan* "down-to-earth" and away from metaphysical philosophizing (Ranade 1984, 129) through a marriage of devotional and sociopolitical discourse (Schultz 2004). It was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, that *nāradīya kīrtan* seems to have taken on the aesthetic orientation it exhibits today, through interactions with the poetic traditions of the *pants* (courtly poets) such as Śrīdhar (1658-1729), Madhvamunīśvar (1680-1734), Amṛtarāya (1698-1753), Mahīpati (1715-1790), and Moropant (1724-1794) (see Ranade 1984, 130 for a historical discussion). The colonial period, and perhaps competition with a fast developing 'golden era' of the Marathi stage, saw the rapid musical and stylistic development of *nāradīya kīrtan*. In the 1880s, notes Ranade, the pedal harmonium was introduced, and, due to Govind-*buvā* Hoshing, the *pūrvaraṅga-uttararaṅga* structure was introduced onto *nāradīya kīrtan*, creating a "broad bifurcation of the overtly didactic and the overtly entertaining" (Ranade 1984, 131).

The defining deature of contemporary *nāradīya kīrtan* is this separation of the performance into two 'acts': *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga*. *Nāradīya kīrtan* generally involves three performers—the *kīrtankār* and his two accompanists: a *peṭī* (harmonium)

player and a *tablā* player. The *kīrtankār* stands facing the deity of the temple, with the *peṭī* player to his left and the *tablā* player to his right. The audience, facing the performers, is divided by gender, with men to the right and women to the left, are seated on the ground with an open aisle in between. The *kīrtankār* is generally dressed in a *pagaḍī* (a stylized, courtly headdress) or *fetā* (turban), *dhotar* (loin cloth), and *uparṇe* (shawl). After he does a *sāṣṭāṅga namaskār* (an eight-point bow) to the deity, the performance begins with the *naman* or *maṅgalācaraṇ*—the opening invocatory verse. In this section, the *kīrtankār* first recites Sanskrit verses to the deity and his *guru*, and leads the audience in *jayjaykārs*, calls of victory to various deities. He then sings a *naman*, a verse of greeting to the deity that is generally unique to the *kīrtankār's gharaṇa* (lineage), and then leads the audience in a *bhajan*, a repetitive and lively devotional song. Then, to initiate the *pūrvaraṅga*, the *kīrtankār* sings a preselected, Marathi *abhaṅga* (verse) from the literature of the *sants*.

After finishing the song, the *kīrtankār*, without accompaniment, recites the *abhaṅga* and begins the *pūrvaraṅga*, in which he presents a religious sermon designed to explain the nuances of the *abhaṅga*. During this section, the *kīrtankār* will often make use of Sanskrit and Marathi poetry, proverbs, anecdotes and narratives to support his stanza-by-stanza exposition of the *abhaṅga*. The *pūrvaraṅga* generally takes the form of a free-flowing, lively sermon; its end is signalled by the *kīrtankār's* return to his original *abhaṅga*.

What follows then is the *madhyantar*, the interval, in which a number of formalities are dispensed with. Announcements of sponsorship and dedications are made by the host and the *kīrtankār*. The *peṭī* player or sometimes an audience member engages

in an impromptu musical performance. While this is going on, the host anoints the *kīrtankār* and his accompanists with a *bukkā*—a black powder smeared on the forehead. The *kīrtankār* applies the *bukkā* on the host, and sprinkles it in all directions, presumably symbolizing application to the audience. The *kīrtankār* is generally garlanded as well as given a gift of a coconut. Then, the *kīrtankār* takes his *uparṇe* from his shoulder and ties it around his waist, and leads the audience in a fast-paced *bhajan*. As the *kīrtan* continues, the host moves through the audience and applies *bukkā* to each member, while a donation box is distributed along with a *prasād* (a holy gift from God)—generally dried fruit and nuts or sugar candy.

After the *bhajan*, the *kīrtankār* begins the *uttararaṅga*, in which he narrates a purāṇic legend (*ākhyān*) through prose and song. The *ākhyān* is generally announced in advance, and often coincides with festivals or occasions that warrant its telling (e.g., telling the story of Dattātreya during Datta Jayantī, or of Hanumān's birth at Hanumān Jayantī). Often, the *akhyāns* take longer than one performance to tell, and continue into the next day's *kīrtan*. The style of narration is a mixture of sung poetry and prose—while many *kīrtankārs* tend to memorize entire *ākhyāns*, the more skillful and popular *kīrtankārs* memorize only the poetry and extemporaneously deliver prose narration. In established *kīrtan paramparās* (lineages), these poems have been passed down from *guru* to disciple for generations. In other cases, they are collections of poetry culled from *sant* literature and compiled in notebooks (*vahīs*) that the *kīrtankār* develops on his own.[24] The object of *kīrtan*, and the highest standard by which a *kīrtankār's* performance is

[24] For a lucid historical discussion of such informal texts, and the impact of their textuality on authorship and the development of religious canons, particularly with respect to Nāmdev, see Christian Novetzke's work (Novetzke 2002, Novetzke 2003).

judged, is to reconnect the *ākhyān* to the original *abhaṅga*, demonstrating how the discursive lessons of the *pūrvaraṅga* are illustrated in the *uttararaṅga* narrative. At the conclusion of the *uttararaṅga*, the *kīrtankār* leads his audience in a final *āratī* (chant), in which the audience rises, singing and clapping in rhythm; during the *āratī*, some members of the audience spin clockwise in a circle to simulate circumambulation of the deity. The *kīrtankār* concludes the event with another *śāṣṭāṅga namaskār* to the deity, and then receives the *namaskārs* and donations of the audience.

The *vārkarī kīrtan* lacks the binary division of *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga*, consisting essentially of just a *naman* and *pūrvaraṅga*. The spatial layout is similar to *nāradīya kīrtan*, in that the *kīrtankār* is standing facing the deity, his accompanists at his side, while his audience is seated facing him, women to his left and men to his right. The *vārkarī kīrtankār* is generally accompanied by a group of 10-15 *ṭāḷkarīs*, a chorus of (usually) men standing in a semicircle behind the *kīrtankār*, who keep rhythm using *ṭāḷs* (small finger cymbals), and sing, dance and sway during the *bhajans*. One of the *tāḷkarīs* plucks a two-stringed *vīṇā* to hold a drone for the *kīrtankār*, while two play *mṛdaṅga* positioned on either side of the *kīrtankār*. During the opening section, the *tāḷkarīs* first lead the audience in a series of *bhajans*, while the *kīrtankār* makes his entry. Involving a lively coordination between *ṭāḷkarī* and *kīrtankār*, this section culminates in the singing of the primary *abhaṅga* of the *kīrtan*. The second half of the *vārkarī kīrtan*, the *nirūpaṇ*, begins with the *kīrtankār* tying his *uparṇe* around his waist, like the *nāradīya uttararaṅga*, reciting the *abhaṅga*, and delivering a long, exegetical discourse on its meaning, embedding *bhajans*, chants of the name of God—"Viṭṭhala, Viṭṭhala"—finally returning to the main *abhaṅga* at the conclusion of the performance.

The presence of a purāṇic *uttararaṅga*, therefore, may be thought of as the essential formal difference between *nāradīya* and *vārkarī* varieties of *kīrtan*. This variation of form is related to a variation of content. It is true that *kīrtan* in general is a form of religious entertainment—or rather, religion through entertainment, in which the object is to present *bhakti* in a lively, 'colored' form that is enjoyable and immediately graspable for the audience. As Ranade notes, however, the *ṭāḷkarī-kīrtankār* layout of *vārkarī kīrtan* lends to the performance as "an act of collective devotion," and a creation of homogenous experience, while the "solo nature" of *nāradīya kīrtan* shows the influence of the "Hindustani art-musician" (Ranade 1984, 134-135). While Ranade ascribes this *nāradīya* move towards "art-performance" to the historical influence of eighteenth-century Peshwa court culture (Ranade 1984, 134-135), I believe it is the presence of the epic and purāṇic narrative that truly distinguishes *nāradīya* from *vārkarī kīrtan*. As Pathak has discussed and as Vasudev Kolhatkar, Gajanan Koparkar, and others have argued, the presence of the *ākhyān* is a linkage to older, pan-Indian traditions of purāṇic and bardic recitation that still take place in major temples of Maharashtra (Pathak 1980, Kolhatkar 1964, Koparkar 1982). I will argue in this dissertation that *nāradīya kīrtan* is an application of the *bhakti* discourse of Marathi *sant* literature to the dharmic questions emerging from (Sanskrit) epic and purāṇic narratives. While *vārkārī kīrtan* therefore may be thought of as operating entirely within the worldview of the *sants*, as a recontextualization and reinterpretation of their ideas to contemporary life, *nāradīya kīrtan* engages in a negotiation between the *sants'* worldview and one even more ancient. Rather than the influences of the Peshwai *pants* and later poets, who undoubtedly have

affected the *kīrtankār's* aesthetic reception, I suggest it is the *paurāṇiks* who have most vividly affected the content and structure of *nāradīya kīrtan*.

From what little is known of the history of purāṇic recitation traditions in Maharashtra, it is rather clear that *paurāṇiks* were Brahmans, and that *nāradīya kīrtankārs* are overwhelmingly Brahmans. The Vārkarī movement, on the other hand, is founded on the castelessness of its community, and as a result, clear social and ideological differences emerge between the social and ideological contexts in which *nāradīya* and *vārkarī kīrtan* is performed. A common claim among *kīrtankārs* is that the objective of *nāradīya kīrtan*, as an "act of communication," is to deliver "higher" religious education to the "unlettered" masses through the form of entertainment (Damle 1960). For a long time, *nāradīya kīrtankārs* have regarded themselves as Brahman religious voices preaching to non-Brahman audiences, and much of Eknāth's so-called *kīrtan* 'reforms' in the sixteenth century seem to be constructing a Brahman vision of what a religious performance ought to do—to reinforce social structures, to 'revitalize' *varṇa* ideology, and to recenter normative texts perhaps devalued during this period by the rise of *bhakti*, Islamic, and Christian movements. Much like the ideological 'religious process' of *purāṇa* composition that Kunal Chakrabarti has described for medieval Bengal, I suggest that we may approach the history of *nāradīya kīrtan* as a Brahman encounter with non-Brahman discourses. While it is true that today there are plenty of non-Brahman *nāradīya kīrtankārs*, and even a few Muslim *nāradīya kīrtankārs*, since the age of Rāmdās *nāradīya kīrtan* has foregrounded the imperative of Hindu moral instruction and social uplift, and this relationship between texts and context is perhaps the

reason why *nāradīya kīrtan*—and not *vārkarī kīrtan*—became such a powerful nationalist tool in the late nineteenth century.

Context-analysis has played a major role in the study of South Asian folklore, largely inspired by the work of A. K. Ramanujan. Much emphasis has been placed on contexts of caste and gender, religion and language, and folklorists have given a vibrant picture of how and why the 'Little Traditions' of South Asia are propagated. However, with few exceptions (Narayan, Shulman), folklorists have tended to ignore or castigate the 'Great Tradition' of Sanskrit literature, or at best, treat it as either a crystallized evolution from folklore (Blackburn), or as a monolith against which folklore constructs a 'counter-system' (Narayana Rao 1986, Ramanujan 1991b). Sanskritists, it must be said, are just as resistant to the idea of orality, preferring documentary forms of historical evidence in which to contextualize their texts, and only in few cases placing them within active and still-living cultural traditions. This dissertation seeks to challenge the ease with which Redfield's Great/Little dichotomy is mapped onto the South Asian cultural scene. While it is true that certain totalizing and all-encompassing literatures and discourses do exist—e.g., *śāstras* and *varṇa*—these are far too easily labeled as 'Brahmanic,' and far too casually regarded as hegemonic.[25] At the same time, 'folk' literatures and discourses—e.g., oral tales and *bhakti*—are far too easily regarded as part of a subaltern, non-Brahman 'counter-system.'

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[25] Indeed, throughout this dissertation I refrain from uncritically applying the term 'Brahmanic,' since it creates an association of ideology to social group that is not, I believe, automatic. Instead, I will generally use the word 'śāstraic' to denote normative ideologies, discourses, or texts that produce the holistic vision of society that we generally think of as Brahmanic, unless there is clearly a Brahman identity being constructed.

Such a labeling, combined with a Dumontian vision of caste, leads to the immediate and misleading equation of the following binaries: Great vs. Little, elite vs. folk, Brahman vs. non-Brahman, hegemonic vs. subaltern. Though it is undeniable that in many historical contexts, śāstraic literature and *varṇa* discourse have been used to exert or reinforce Brahman sociopolitical dominance, to assume that this is a natural condition of the text or the discourse ignores the historical maneuvers that underlie these cultural constructs, as Michel Foucault has so vividly exposed for nineteenth-century Europe. To dismantle these dichotomies, this dissertation begins with the belief that Brahmans may also be folk. Alan Dundes's concept of "folk group" is particularly useful here, for if we realize that a folk group consists of "any group of people whatsoever who share one common linking factor" (Dundes 1999, vii), it is evident that a Brahman in contemporary India belongs to a constantly changing number of folk groups, including but not limited to those who call themselves Brahmans, and that the identities of these folk groups are constructed through the folklore they share among themselves, and the folklore they do not share with others.[26] In order to understand how societal groups may represent themselves through structuralisms other than *varṇa*, we turn to post-Dumontian approaches to the theory of caste.

III. The ideology and multiplicity of caste

Of all social phenomena in South Asia, nothing has been quite as thoroughly documented or debated as caste. What began with ethnographic inquiries into "manners,

[26] For more on folk groups, see Toelken 1996, 55-116.

customs, and ceremonies,"[27] and with Indological studies of ancient Hindu society,[28] eventually transformed into the full-scale social anthropological discipline of village studies in the 1950s and 1960s,[29] culminating in 1966 with the publication of *Homo Hierarchicus*, Louis Dumont's monumental *tour de force*. From this point onwards, the theoretical study of caste has become either the modification or extension of Dumont's primary arguments,[30] or successively bolder and bolder attacks, to the extent that Dumont's position by now appears to have become significantly devalued, if not infrequently dismissed altogether. Dumont's work, however, was to have a profound and lasting impact on the theory of caste—on the sort of questions that were asked of caste and on its broader academic reception in the discipline of social anthropology. After Dumont, Western scholarship could no longer be content with merely reporting the "substantive" features of individual castes or with charting specific inter-caste "transactions" and interactions. Dumont, more than anyone else, made us speak of structure.

At the same time, it has been argued that Dumont's philosophical grounding—his assertion of "holism" as the defining cultural feature of South Asia *vis-à-vis* the individualism of the West—has only served to reinforce the predominant schism in South

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[27] For representative examples of early Western ethnography, see Dubois 1906, Crooke 1973, Baines 1912, Ibbetson 1916, Risley 1917. For a discussion of pre-modern European and Arabic travel accounts of caste, see Bandyopadhyay 1974. Cohn 1968, Inden 2000a, and Dirks 2001 are especially useful for insight into the political motivations behind the colonial study of caste.

[28] Classic Indological efforts are Apte 1940, Bose 1968, Dutt 1931, Ghosh 1945, Ghurye 1932, Ketkar 1909, Kosambi 1946, Muir 1868. While numerous scholars provide textual references to caste, a useful survey is found in Rocher 1975.

[29] The amount of this literature is vast, as evinced by numerous bibliographical reviews on caste: Gilbert 1948,Srinivas, Damle, Shahani, and Béteille 1959, Damle 1961, Champion 1982, Raheja 1988a. A few key village studies can be found in Srinivas 1952, Srinivas 1960, Marriott 1955, and Mayer 1960.

[30] A few examples are Barnett, Fruzetti, and Östor 1976, Kolenda 1976, Moffatt 1979, Hayden 1983,Chenet 1989.

Asian studies between what André Béteille has termed the (Indological) "book-view" and (anthropological) "field-view" of South Asia (Béteille 1991, 33-35).[31] The thematic limits of either approach have by now been well recognized and extensively interrogated, particularly by Inden:

> Caste, then, is assumed to be the "essence" of Indian civilization. People in India are not even partially autonomous agents. They do not shape and reshape their world. Rather they are the patients of that which makes them Indians—the social, material reality of caste. The people of India are not the makers of their own history. A hidden, substantialized agent, Caste, is the maker of it. (Inden 1986, 428)

This Orientalist reductionism, claims Inden, has turned South Asian cultural institutions into objects of exclusively Western inquiry and explanation—as "knowledges that must be subjugated" (Inden 1986, 421). However, ignoring caste completely is clearly not a solution to the problem, nor does it seem to be Inden's solution to the problem, as he calls for a type of approach that begins with the assumption that "the societies of the world are not more or less 'correct' images of a *single* reality but are themselves differing realities, constructed again and again in relation to those around them, by human thought and action" (Inden 1986, 446). In the end, he would like to see India as a "product of its own thoughts and acts."[32] A way to do this, I suggest, is to turn to the *representations* of caste in epic and purāṇic subnarratives, in order to locate moments in which cultural performances negotiate social structure.

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[31] The works of Jan Heesterman and Gloria Raheja exemplify this divide; while both challenge Dumont, the Indologist Heesterman proceeds from an ancient 'axial breakthrough' between Brahman and Kṣatriya *varṇas* in post-vedic texts as being the defining moment of Dumontian caste (Heesterman 1985), while Raheja focuses on the village-level, ritual prestations (*dān*) given out by the dominant caste as defining a central/peripheral social order (Raheja 1988b).
[32] This is also exactly what he has endeavored to do (Inden 2000a, Inden, Walters, and Ali 2000).

From early on, definitional studies recognized caste as an evolution of two indigenous epistemes: the globally constant, classical social categories of *varṇa* (Brahman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra) as well as locally variant, empirical configurations of *jātis* (consisting of actual, observable kinship/occupational groups).[33] This led to the theorization of caste as a universal, innate construct—as one, all-India social system of rank, ideologized as *varṇa* and actualized in local *jātis*. In such a climate, *Homo Hierarchicus* presented Dumont's holistic vision of caste, in which the following principles applied: 1. The fundamental characteristic of the caste system is hierarchy (of *jātis*). 2. This *jāti* hierarchy is based on the binary opposition of purity and pollution. 3. On the level of *varṇa*, power is disjunct from status, and is in fact encompassed by it (Dumont 1980). Though his first two points were hardly new revelations, Dumont's theoretical leap was his hypothesis that localized configurations of *jāti* are *governed* by the absolute distinction between the (religious) status of the Brahman and the (political) power of the Kṣatriya.[34]

The reductionism involved in this model of governance is largely where Dumont's later critics took him to task,[35] often searching instead for a multi-dimensional model of caste, in which "ways of life other than the Brahmanic could be seen as

[33] See for example Bailey 1963, Bouglé 1971, Pitt-Rivers 1971, Leach 1960, Hutton 1963.

[34] As Dirks comments, "Dumont has suggested that caste is fundamentally religious, and that religious principles actualise themselves in the domain of purity and pollution" (Dirks 1989, 61). Dumont's approach was, of course, based on Saussurean structuralism— the *jātis* are the *parole* of caste, and *varṇa*, its *langue*.

[35] These include Berreman 1971, Mencher 1974, Heesterman 1985, Dirks 1987, Raheja 1988b, Quigley 1993. Gerald Berreman declared Dumont's 'Brahmannical' (*sic*) version of caste to be "so incomplete, selective, and biased as to amount to a serious distortion of the nature of caste as it is experienced by those who live it" (Berreman 1971, 17). Gloria Raheja declares Dumont's interpretation of caste to be "incapable of comprehending the contextuality, circumstantiality and shifting emphases that characterise ongoing social life in India as elsewhere" (Raheja 1989, 81). Nicholas Dirks claims that caste in India as we know it is a colonial phenomenon and argues instead for the socio-political centrality of the king (Dirks 1989, 59). Declan Quigley questions the universal scholarly acceptance of Brahmanic supremacy (Quigley 1993, 84), as well as Brahmanic purity (Quigley 1993, 54); Parry 1980 and Fuller 1984 also make similar claims).

indigenously valued, culturally comprehensive, and socially enacted in various ways in the Indian village" (Raheja 1988a, 505, discussing Marriott 1959, 1976). The result was a number of endeavors seeking to systematize these "ways of life," perhaps the most thought-provoking being Richard Burghart's study of Nepali Hindu social structure (Burghart 1978).[36] Burghart proposed a simultaneity in which Brahmans, kings, and ascetics each are superior in their own realms, based on status-claims arising from distinct hierarchies.[37] Urging us away from hypothesizing (more and more complex) structures that underlie social formations towards taking plurality seriously, Burghart, Veena Das (Das 1977), and others ushered in the contextual and post-structural approaches of the 1980s and 1990s.

The conceptualization of South Asian social structure as competing ideological representations rather than a monolithic, overarching system leads directly to an inquiry into what might be termed an intertextuality of these representations. That is, how (and where, and when) does the classical ideology of *varṇa* interact with alternative folk configurations? In which context, and why, is a particular ideology dominant? Folklorists have suggested that it is possible to "view folk and classical traditions as coexistent and available (in varying degrees) to everyone, as codes switched by rules of context, like speech varieties in a speaker's repertoire" (Blackburn and Ramanujan 1986, 19-20). And

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[36] Edmund Leach, for example, advocated an 'aspect'-based approach (Leach 1960); Peter Gardner contested this with his 'componential' model (Gardner 1968); later, Gabriella Ferro-Luzzi's Wittgenstein-influenced model improves on this idea (Ferro-Luzzi 1986). John Cove, using the sociology of Talcott Parsons, presented a 'multi-dimensional' model of caste ranking (Cove 1973, 131); Hazelhurst 1968 is another, earlier, example of an attempt to define 'multiple status hierarchies.'

[37] The Brahman-centered hierarchy is the *varṇa* system, the kingly hierarchical model is represented by the *artha*-śāstraic ordering of Hindu polity, and the ascetic model is the "cycle of confused wandering of embodied souls" (Burghart 1978, 521), with the ascetic at the top, closest to liberation, down to the "proverbial worm living in excrement" (Burghart 1978, 522).

as context-centered studies such as Raheja's have implied,[38] this coexistence is not necessarily harmonious, and a variety of factors—political, religious, economic, cultural—come into play in determining which ideology is dominant.[39]

Understanding caste as a plural text allows for agents within these larger systematic configurations. From this perspective, a particular *jāti* controls its situation not by simply operating passively within the *varṇa* system, but through active moments of self-representation and negotiation of *varṇa*. In the merger of Kuṇbīs into Marāṭhās described in Anthony Carter's and Irawati Karve's studies of Maharashtra, we are able to locate such a negotiation. Before the seventeenth-century ascension of the Marāṭhā king Shivājī, "in effect there were only two varṇas, *viz.* Brahman and Shudra" (Karve 1958b, 882). While his kingship paved the way for the Marāṭhās claiming Kṣatriya status, the agriculturalist Kuṇbīs, who continued to be considered Śūdra (Karve 1958a, 401, Karve 1958b, 882), merged into the (non-śāstraic) Marāṭhā category in the early twentieth century due to a "strong anti-Brahman front" (Karve 1958b, 883). As Carter demonstrates, Kuṇbī status change did not come from linear, behavioral "Sanskritization" (Srinivas 1989), but through an ideological claim—a juxtaposition within Marāṭhā "caste *purāṇas*" of these two competing social configurations: the śāstraic system of Brahman-Kṣatriya-Śūdra and the folk system of Brahman-Marāṭhā-Kuṇbī. As Carter explains,

> Although this mythological caste genealogy and the associated notions of vansha and gotra have little or no part to play in the ordinary thoughts and

[38] According to Raheja's threefold model, 'centrality' is the normative (though non-classical) ideology, in which the dominant caste is involved in a central-peripheral social model of ritualized gift giving. 'Hierarchy', is the classical ideology of *varṇa* with Brahman focus, while an ideology of 'mutuality' is used with groups considered 'one's own' (Raheja 1989).

[39] Indeed, the contextualization of caste has become a significant focus of more recent research in South Asian social anthropology. See for example McGilvray 1982, Gellner and Quigley 1995, Parish 1996, Searle-Chatterjee and Sharma 1994.

> activities of Marāṭhā caste members, they do provide the caste with a justification for its claim to Kṣatriya status and with a kind of boundary as a status bearing unit in the segmentary caste system. (Carter 1975, 130).

In other words the caste *purāṇa* allows the *jāti* group to construct a boundary and to represent who they are and who are *not* within a larger cultural stage.

Texts like caste *purāṇas*, oral histories, or personal anecdotes have long been crucial to the anthropological investigation of caste. However, Sanskrit narratives about caste, and particularly those found in the two epics and the eighteen mahā*purāṇas*, have tended to be studied as ancient, prismatic reflections of the way caste really was in ancient India. What is lost in such an approach is the interplay between a narrative's structure and its historical moment of articulation—in other words, its "breakthrough into performance." To arrive at a history of textual performance, this dissertation engages in a comparative method that does not simply liquidate textual variation to arrive at a *ur*-form, but instead locates this variation as a moment of textual and discursive difference (perhaps more appropriately, *différance*), in which we may understand how the plurality of text affects the negotiation of discourse through the context of performance.[40]

IV. Reading and listening to Viśvāmitra legends: Sources and chapter outline

The present project is an examination of two sorts of materials: written ancient and medieval texts, and oral, contemporary performances of *nāradīya kīrtan*. Though I take recourse to a wide variety of Sanskrit and Marathi primary sources, the central texts of inquiry have been the two Sanskrit epics (the *Mahābhārata* and the Vālmīki

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[40] My approach therefore invokes the deconstructionist agenda of Jacques Derrida (Derrida 1978) as well as Carl von Sydow's ruminations on folklore 'oicotypes' (see Dundes 1999, 137-151 for a short introduction to von Sydow's work).

Rāmāyaṇa) and the major *purāṇas*, including the medieval *Skanda* and *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇas*, in which the narratives of Viśvāmitra get particularly lengthy treatment. Wherever possible, I have used the critical editions of the text, and analyzed variant readings found in the apparatus—however, it must be noted that for a majority of *purāṇas*, critical editions, or even well-edited texts, are sorely lacking. For the Marathi medieval *sant* literature that I examine in Chapter Five, the situation is even worse, and, for example, each edition of Mukteśvar's (seventeenth-century) *Hariścandrākhyān* presents variant readings of practically every verse. Though these text-level fluidities give this dissertation a lack of linguistic or philological precision, I hope that the stabilities of the underlying narrative and performance structures will nonetheless grant this work a certain amount of rigor.

Though in my research I consulted a number of written *kīrtan* texts, listened to cassette recordings, and watched a great deal of *nāradīya* and *vārkarī kīrtan* performances during my stay in Pune in 2000-2001, the majority of my analysis focuses on one set of *nāradīya kīrtans* delivered by Vaman-*buwā* Kolhatkar in the lunar month of Mārgaśīrṣa (November-December) 2000, at the Nārad Mandir temple, located in the Sadashiv Peth district of Pune.[41] Knowing the focus of my dissertation work, Kolhatkar-*buwā* performed a month-long *kīrtan* on Viśvāmitra. The first five days were spent telling the legend of Gaṇeśa's birth from the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa*, and for the final week he moved into an *akhyān* on Pṛthivirāj Chauhān; in between, however, for a total of 19 days,

[41] Nārad Mandir was dedicated in the early twentieth century specifically to support the institution of *nāradīya kīrtan*, and is adjacent to Vyās Mandir, a temple dedicated to the 'other' *ṛṣi* Vyāsa, patron of *paurāṇik* traditions. Narad Mandir houses the offices, classrooms, and library of the Harikīrtanottejak Sabhā, an organization that promotes, teaches, and supports *kīrtan* performances the year round in Pune. Practically every evening at 6 pm, one may sit in the open-air outer hall of Narad Mandir and listen to a 90-minute *nāradīya kīrtan*.

Kolhatkar managed to narrate all of the major legends of Viśvāmitra. With the *buwā's* permission, I recorded these public *kīrtans* while sitting in the audience using a minidisc recorder and small, inconspicuous condenser microphones; while all of the translations in the dissertation are my own, I thank his daughter Ratnadha Kolhatkar for her precise and beautiful transcriptions of a majority of the audio recordings. Without her generosity, this dissertation would still be in its infancy.

Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s personality, character, and scholarly breadth is, I hope, already evident from the anecdotal sketch with which I began this introduction. Perhaps to lead into the next chapters of this dissertation, which will acquaint the reader with the *buwā's* teachings and opinions on everything from caste, *purāṇas*, *bhakti*, and even Kaun Banega Crorepati, it is best if we turned to a moving anecdote that he told on the fifth day of his *kīrtans*, December 1, 2000, during the *pūrvaraṅga* of his second "Kānyakubja" *kīrtan*, as he was trying to explain the religious significance of *tapascaryā* (ascetic practice) in making the impossible possible. Remembering a time when a woman who could barely cook was suddenly forced to feed him and his family, Kolhatkar launched into a personal narrative about a harrowing ordeal in which he, his wife, and his infant daughter were caught and nearly killed during rioting in Delhi during the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984. Though compelling on its own, it is through the humor and ease with which he tells his story that demonstrates both his eloquence (*vaktṛtva*) and a bit of his personal religious politics:

> We once had gone to Delhi, you see. *Hā̃*! Indira Gandhi had died, and in that whole train, there had been slayings. Blankets of blood are flowing down out of every car. It was me, her [his wife], and with us our baby child. This youngest daughter of ours now, then she was just a newborn. Maybe six months of age or

so. She was very little. And our accompanist was also there. I had gone there for a *kīrtan*. Tuḷaśī's wedding *kīrtan*. And on exactly that day I was in the train.

The *kīrtan* was for Tuḷaśī's wedding, and we were going there, so I said come on—there were a few days of vacation, and so I said "come on, at least we'll be able to go and see Delhi." But this is what happened to our Delhi! Piles of *muṇḍyā* (corpses?) in the whole car, pools of blood. Because none of the Sardārjīs [Sikhs] had listened—when we had come earlier into Mathurā, and the police there announced to us: "You 'Sardārjī' people should come out right here, the situation in Delhi is very bad." But many of the Sardārjīs didn't pay heed—"Eh? What will happen? Our homes are there." But as we got closer to Delhi, there were so many murders going on—in some places they were killing Hindus, in some places they were killing them. Such murders were taking place. And in the midst of this, so many people…[pause]…Right in front of me, so many people, like sheep—how can I describe this here? It is horrific! We saw a living person being set on fire, you see…[laughs, uneasily]…A living person, all over his body they…He is there! Standing there like Vaman Kolhatkar. He has nothing. He is shaking and quivering. And he is afraid like this. They pour *rākel* [kerosene] onto his body. And they put a match to his *pants. …[pause]. After that, taking *railway rails—*Railway rails, aren't they there, as the fencing on the side? They had broken them off, and whoever they'd see they'd smack them right here—*Khāḍ*!—Right on the side of the face. He would fall right then and there. How would he survive? Then they throw all of his luggage right on top of him, and then make a *hoḷī* [bonfire] out of him. I saw so much like this.

That day, on our trip. We got stuck in our journey, at that station called "Udhakabad" right before Delhi. We were stopped there. And in that place, so much murder. Right behind us, came the Rajdhani Express. And, you see, there were *military people, In the *air conditioned and *first-class cars. They did not get out at all. They had *pistols, didn't they? They did not get down at all. But against this many people, what could their *pistols do? In the railway car, their pools of blood—of those big *military Sardārjīs, who had big, big bodies—nothing, just pools and pools of their blood. This sort of horrific sight, that you might see in hell, was what we saw.

And from there, after many sorts of difficulties, we finally arrived in Delhi at 10:30 or 11 at night. It was a very tense environment. At what moment would there be rioting, would there be fighting? Whom would they kill? That is, the issue was about slaughtering someone, there was nothing in between, you see. [Laughs nervously]. And I had a beard. And so they grabbed me as well, you see…all of those things that are in the cinema, they all happened! And then, one person said to me, then I explained to one man, look at my top-knot, look at my *jāhniva* [sacred thread], look at my *jhā̃j* [cymbals]—I showed him everything. "I'm going for Tuḷaśī's wedding, I'm a *kīrtankār* from Maharashtra! This is my wife, this is my daughter!" And so on—everything happened. He said, "*Yeh ṭhīk*

hai, sāhab, par ab nīce jāoge, gāḍī se nīce, tab dāḍhī dekh ke khatam kar dẽge, puchẽge nahī. [In Hindi: 'That is fine, Sir, but when you will get down from the train, they will finish you off, seeing your beard, they won't ask questions]." He had come into the car for *checking, you see. When you come down [from the car] they will see your beard and kill you. They will not ask you there, "Who are you, where have you come from?"

And so then, there, immediately—there were 2 or 4 people there. Now, I used to grow a beard then, and so it was not even an issue to shave off the beard. And so then the people in the car gave me a razor, but then the question arose, if I went inside, and while I was shaving it off, if someone came in right then…then even more of a *bombābomb* [ruckus]! [Laughter]. And so then there was a knot in our stomachs. If someone came right at that time and started saying, "*Darvājā kholo, darvājā kholo* [In Hindi: 'Open the door! Open the door!']," then what will I do? Under such circumstances, I shaved off my beard and everything, and then I became this mongrel-looking man [*māṅguḷī māṇus*], after taking off my beard—like a lion without his mane.

And then, at night, we were just sitting *tuḍumba* in that station at Delhi. Oh, everything was closed, there were no means to go ahead. All the cars outside just stopped, everything jammed, all the *telephone machines filled up with coins and coins, no phone connections anywhere. We were stuck in such a situation, and eventually, at 6:30 in the morning—it was the month of October, or November—maybe it was the first of November, perhaps. And, in the early dawn, we hired a Tempo or rickshaw or whatever, and he asked for double the amount, but we gave it to him, because after all it was an issue of staying alive. And then we sat in that car, and he took up more people—who would say anything to anyone else? There was no way of even speaking. Somehow, we all just had to go somewhere. And then, that group which had invited me—actually my brother lives in Delhi, or he used to live there, at the time. I was going to go to my brother's. in Karol Bag. But then some people told us—they made an inquiry and told us which areas you may go into. If you want to live, then just go into these *areas. It's not possible to stay alive here. And Karol Bag wasn't among these—it had a red mark on it. And so in the place where we were able to go, among the people who had invited us, was the *secretary's house.

So we went to his house. Ok, and it was Kārtikī Ekādaśī. ... The day of the *kīrtan* was on Kārtikī Ekādaśī. We arrived there at dawn, at their house, and, it was my little baby, this *peṭī*-player, she [meaning his wife], and I. And we went there, somehow or other that rickshaw-driver dropped us off somewhere there, and said, "*Yahā̃ se paidal jānā, andar nahī jāū̃gā* [In Hindi: 'You must go from here on foot. I won't go inside']." Oh, now we had a lump in our stomach, because they would kill anyone! At that time, the only activity was to kill. But then, through some ordeals, hiding here and there, showing it, we finally arrived there. And, once we arrived there, that *area was the *All-India Medical Institute

of…[Asking his wife in the audience:] Wasn't it something like that? We were near it. We went inside there, rang the *bell, they took us inside, and after a little while, his wife's legs began to shake. "How am I going to cook for these three people?" and [laughing] because of that, I remembered all of this.

That woman just wasn't used to cooking for anyone beyond her husband, herself, and her one son! And because of this I remembered this whole mess, you see. And we realized that all of a sudden she became despondent. In the morning, we bathed and everything, and then did *snān-sandhyā*, and as he is doing his *pūjā* and so on, that woman is completely terrified. Her *blood pressure has increased, there is *tension, she isn't aware of anything, and is just comes into the middle of the room and sits down. And then [my wife]—she decided, she understood what the problem was, and she said, "My dear, you just stay here comfortably, and I will cook for everyone. Don't worry about this at all. I will cook food for everyone. You should take rest today. It's your vacation today!" But even then, [she's thinking,] "How can I tell this woman about which container she should grab in the kitchen?" There are many *pressures, you see in the minds of women-folk. "How can I tell her where the tapioca is?" Or then, "How can I tell her where the crushed peanuts are?" That woman was so frightened that eventually her husband, meaning that *Secretary, called me over. There is a Viṭṭhala temple there, of Maharashtrian people, I had gone there. He told me, "You see that in our house there is someone who is ill, be careful." He thought that these people will be unnecessarily frightened, they had just come in, all fatigued. But we were of course fasting since the day before. We had set off, one day had gone by in the train, when those murders were going on, and we were unfed. Because then I had a full fast. Our Ekādaśī happened on Daśamī. It was different, you might say—it happened on Daśamī. And then on Ekādaśī we arrived there. It was in this sort of ordeal that I realized, if instead of three people, this woman begins to shake in fear at having to cook for five people, what would happen if she had to cook for 100 people? (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 1, 2000)

His narrative, I believe, largely speaks for itself, illustrating how moving *nāradīya kīrtan* can be, with intense interactions between performer, his text, and his audience. The graphic violence and sheer terror of Kolhatkar's experience was not lost on his audience, who were gasping, wide-eyed, and in rapt attention, despite his frequently interspersed, good-natured smiles and laughter. We were only to return to normal, with audible sighs of relief, when his *pūrvaraṅga* returned to the issue of cooking for 100 people. At the same time, his narrative managed to immerse normative religious discourse—fasting,

snān-sandhyā, ritual fasting, even *kīrtan* performance—directly into the narrative's moment of communal terror, as all of his religious devotion, years of rigorous ritual practices, and tremendous śāstraic knowledge, were reduced to a mere play of religious symbols in which his Hindu top-knot and thread came into conflict with the now suddenly Sikh symbol of his beard, which would likely have resulted in his death. The public, violent slippages of religious identity were countered with the narrative's domestic ending, in which after the ordeal, Kolhatkar returned to the day-to-day business of preparing meals, bathing, and doing *sandhyā*. As the reader becomes familiar with Kolhatkar's philosophies and performance strategies through the chapters of this dissertation, it will perhaps become clearer how this structural opposition of chaotic public space and rigidly controlled domestic space orders Kolhatkar-*buwā's* religious discourse of *dharma* and *bhakti*, as well as his—and many others'—daily lives in South Asia.

While other scholars have generally traced the development of texts from Vedic to classical to medieval to modern historical periods, I realized that such a project would be impossible for the comparisons I wished to make. As a result this dissertation is organized by legend, and each chapter pays particular attention to one legend and the cluster of supplementary and complementary narratives that surround it. At the same time, there is a development of the theoretical notion of 'textual performance' that moves from the concept of narrative maps (Chapters Two and Three) to discursive homology (Chapters Four and Five). Chapter Two is a study of the Satyavatī legend, the birth story of both Viśvāmitra, the Brahman-Kṣatriya, and Paraśurāma, the Kṣatriya-Brahman. This chapter is a continuation of our investigation into the representations of caste, focusing on

how ideological dialogue takes place in the 'mapping' of *varṇa* onto the domestic spaces of the storyworld. Chapter Three moves to the central narrative of Viśvāmitra's *varṇa* change: the '*kāmadhenu* legend' of Viśvāmitra's squabble with Vasiṣṭha and subsequent quest for Brahmanhood. This chapter analyzes how movements across mapped *varṇa*/domestic boundaries within the storyworld affect realworld discourses—social, political, religious—through homology, the relationship between between ancient past and the present produced during performance. Chapter Four turns to the Triśaṅku legend, as well as the Śvapaca story, as a starving Viśvāmitra during famine attempts to steal a piece of dogmeat from the home of an untouchable. This chapter investigates the homology of 'translation,' in which elements from the storyworld are 'translated' into contemporary discourse. Chapter Five is an analysis of the Hariścandra legend the complementary legend of Śunaḥśepa. This chapter turns to the homology of 'immersion,' as the performer thrusts his audience, discourses and all, into the storyworld. The concluding Chapter Six takes a brief look at the legend of Menakā and the divine attempts to prevent Viśvāmitra's *varṇa* change, before summarizing the larger implications of this project.

CHAPTER TWO

DOMESTICIZING CASTE: *VARṆA*, SPACE, AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE BIRTH LEGENDS OF VIŚVĀMITRA

This chapter develops two crucial narratological arguments. First, I argue that the legends of Viśvāmitra map the hierarchical structure of *varṇa*, articulated by older śāstraic literature (i.e., the 'legal codes' of ancient India),[1] onto a 'fluid' purāṇic storyworld that is ordered by domestic boundaries rather than social oppositions.[2] This mapping generates an interdiscursive negotiation of caste. This chapter will examine the mechanics of this narrative mapping in the motif-variation among the nine epic and purāṇic versions of the legend of Viśvāmitra's birth, the legend of Satyavatī. Second, in order to understand why caste is narrativized—that is, why counter-normative legends like those of Viśvāmitra are embedded into primary epic and purāṇic plot-lines in the first place—it is necessary to read them not as remnants of an unwieldy inflation of a 'core epic' or an '*ur-purāṇa*,' but as meaningful 'textual performances' that create discursive spaces in which legitimate questions regarding normative structure are first raised then answered. To find out how this textual plurality actually takes place within a

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[1] According to P. V. Kane, "works on the *dharmaśāstra* existed prior to Yāska or at least prior to the period 600-200 B.C. and in the 2nd century B.C. they had attained a position of supreme authority in regulating the conduct of men" (Kane 1990, vol. 1, part 1: 14).

[2] I use the narratological term 'storyworld' following Herman 2002, especially in his discussion of spatialization (Chapter 7). Herman describes storyworlds as "mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate—or make a deictic shift—as they work to comprehend a narrative" (Herman 2002, 9). It should be noted that this concept does not insist on their fictionality, for "interpreting nonfictional (retrospective) narratives entails relocating not to an alternative possible world but to a possible world that is an earlier—and perhaps competing—version of the world deemed actual" (Herman 2002, 15). To designate the constructed 'actual' world, I will use the term 'realworld.'

performance, and to see how it may be used to create new interdiscursive negotiations, the final section of the chapter turns to the Satyavatī legend in Marathi *kīrtan*.

I. The Narrativization of caste

Until the theoretical directions initiated by the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and others who have come to be known as 'post-structural', a common assumption in Western literary theory held that the surface features of narrative texts, and in particular 'traditional' ones, were manifestations of a deeper system of human codes.[3] Louis Dumont understood these codes—'caste'—to be characterized by a particular, grammatical relationship of governance between *varṇa* and *jāti*, in which *varṇa* (ordered by the opposition of political power and religious status) is 'conjugated' as *jāti* (organized by the opposition of purity and pollution). And so, claimed Dumont, "the existence of the theory of the pure and impure presupposes at least the relationship established in the *varṇas* between priesthood and royalty" (Dumont 1980, 74).[4] Simply put, purity is a formal manifestation of ritual status (Quigley 1993, 26). A Dumontian narratology, therefore, identifies symbolic manifestations of pure and impure within a particular text in order to illuminate the underlying workings of *varṇa*.[5]

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[3] For a thorough critique of the Indological study of texts as documentary reflections, see Ronald Inden's thought-provoking "Introduction" to the volume co-authored with Daud Ali and Johnathan Walters (Inden 2000c)

[4] Dumont's idea of the "opposition of the pure and impure" as the "single true principle" (Dumont 1980, 43) organizing *jātis* was not uniquely his own—precursors include the works of H. N. C. Stevenson (Stevenson 1954) as well as S. V. Ketkar (Ketkar 1909), M. N. Srinivas (Srinivas 1962), Henry Orenstein (Orenstein 1965), and others for whom purity and pollution become substantive factors in determining caste hierarchy.

[5] David Gordon White has done precisely this for the Sanskrit legends of Viśvāmitra, regarding the sage as Levi-Straussian mediator between Brahman and Kṣatriya *varṇas*, whose symbolic associations with pure cows and impure dogs mark his mediation (White 1992)

However, as Robert Goldman has demonstrated on a psychoanalytic level (Goldman 1978, 327), it is precisely the counter-normative force of things marginalized as polluting in classical *varṇa* ideology that is centralized in any 'good' story about caste. The Sanskrit epics and *purāṇas*, in order to understand this counter-normative force, embed these stories as subnarratives, and this process is central to why these texts are deemed '*itihāsas*'—texts that tell 'what really happened' ('*iti ha āsa*'). Thus, when Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma about the history of Viśvāmitra in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 13.3), eager to know how a Kṣatriya could become a Brahman, Bhīṣma responds with the Satyavatī legend (*Mbh* 13.4). Clearly, the implication is that there is an imperfect fit between two presuppositions—what Yudhiṣṭhira (representing the epic audience) thinks 'ought to be' (i.e., śāstraically ordained *varṇa* hierarchy) and what he knows 'really happened' (Viśvāmitra's *varṇa* transformation). It becomes Bhīṣma's task (as the epic storyteller) to map the śāstraic ideology of *varṇa* onto the legendary storyworld in a way that normativizes Viśvāmitra's aberrant behavior. In doing so, the *Mahābhārata's* textual performance of the Satyavatī legend allows the narrative to behave as a vehicle of ideology.[6] Following Inden's suggestion that a text is "not merely a 'source' that passively records events, but an intervention on the part of an agent in the world" (Inden 2000c, 13), it makes more sense to think of the insertion of subnarratives

[6] As a 'vehicle of ideology,' explains Jonathan Culler, a literary work serves to "seduce readers into accepting the hierarchical arrangements of society" (Culler 1997, 38). In the case of epic and purāṇic subnarratives, the concept of 'seduction' is perhaps misleading, since it is a *resistance* to (another sort of) 'seduction' that allows Viśvāmitra to become a Brahman. That is to say, the epic or purāṇa does not attempt to sugar-coat its normative ideology within a titillating tale, but rather presents a preexisting counter-normative story in such a way that it fits into normative ideological discourse. For more theoretical discussion of literature and ideology, see Jameson 1972, Williams 1977, Macherey and Balibar 1981, Eagleton 1996. For discussions of purāṇic narratives as vehicles of ideology, see Narayana Rao 1993, Inden 2000b, 96.

like the Viśvāmitra legends as epic and purāṇic confrontations with śāstraic irregularities, and not as accidental reflections of them or as inert manifestations of ancient lore passing casually from text to text.

However, if we assert that *varṇa* is a śāstraic structuralism actively projected onto the storyworld during the performance of a legend, we are forced to ask if any sort of structure preexists in this space before this mapping. Is the purāṇic universe, before applying the *śāstras*, unstructured? Is it anarchy? If, on the contrary, there are non-śāstraic discourses that structure purāṇic subnarratives, then where do these come from? This line of inquiry has in fact been of central concern to theorists of South Asian folk narratives, and in an influential study of Kannada folklore, A. K. Ramanujan has demonstrated how ideas of domestic and public space determine the fluidity of forms within a folklore system in one Karnataka village (Ramanujan 1986). Relating domestic and public performance settings to the Tamil literary categories of *akam* and *puram*, and discussing the flow of 'folk streams' across these boundaries of public and domestic space, Ramanujan arrives at a rather intriguing system of organization:

> The division, in Indian village society especially, is not between private and public, between personal and impersonal, but between the *domestic* and the *public*—between the inner circle or the immediate kin within the four (or more) walls of a house and the larger circles of the extended family, the subcaste, the caste, and the society at large. (Ramanujan 1986, 49-50)

This notion of *domesticity*, the boundary that separates the many domestic 'insides' from the single public 'outside,' may be thought of as a 'folk' structuralism, and one that allows us to productively connect texts to contexts. As Ramanujan suggests, *akam*/*puram* structure simultaneously orders literary and folkloric forms, performance settings, as well as social groups. It is also a fluid ordering, since domestic boundaries are defined by

context, and not as *a priori* structural categories or relationships.[7] Reminded of Alan Dundes's insistence on value of 'oral literary criticism' in analyzing folklore, I suggest that domesticity provides us a way of understanding how folk groups actually understand the structures of their own narratives.[8]

Domesticity therefore is a structralism that is not only indigenous, and arguably folk, but one that is distinct from Dumont's problematic model of caste. Since there are many 'insides' and only one 'outside,' domesticity is not a linearly ordered hierarchy. As a result, boundaries—not absolute binary oppositions—are what define the relations between caste groups. These boundaries, as this dissertation will demonstrate, are historically and culturally negotiated in literary spaces.[9] This type of narratology is not interested in identifying symbolic manifestations of an underlying Brahman-Kṣatriya dichotomy (and hierarchical relationship of power); instead, the focus is on how a story articulates the boundary between these two domesticities, and how movements into and out of domestic spaces represent conflicts of power. A legitimate question does arise, however, regarding the universality of this alternative construct: is Ramanujan's application of what are, after all, ancient Tamil literary concepts to the contexts of Kannada folklore importable, wholesale, into a pan-Indian, Sanskrit-centered discussion of caste in epic and purāṇic texts? Clearly, in a broader discussion of social structure we must quickly abandon the Tamil classical notions of *akam* and *puram* and their

[7] The anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel reinforces this notion of fluid structures for the situation in Tamil village culture, asserting that the caste system is "but one of many surface manifestations of this system of ranked substances" (Daniel 1984, 2), and that these 'intersubstantial relationships' are also organized along concentric boundaries of space, along "the fluidity of enclosures in Tamil conceptual thought, whether the boundaries of a village, the walls of a house, the skin of a person" (Daniel 1984, 9).
[8] See Dundes 1966 (contextualized to South Asia in Narayan 1997, 211; see also Narayan 1995).
[9] A variety of folklorists have focused on the construction of caste identity through folk narrative. See for example Narayana Rao 1986, Hart 1986, Ramanujan 1986, Flueckiger 1989, Frasca 1990, Narayana Rao 1993, Flueckiger 1996, Narayan 1997, Subbachary 1998, Sax 2002.

accompanying aesthetic landscapes, retaining the structural principle of domesticity that informs these ancient Tamil poetics. On the other hand, domesticity, as I will demonstrate, is nothing dramatically new, but something that has become quite common in pan-Indian anthropological theorizations of caste in the central-peripheral models of post-Dumontian scholars.

Dumont's critical assumption that the binary opposition of purity and pollution underlies the system of caste has become the site of a lively anthropological debate.[10] Dundes, though in support of Dumont, remarks that the "mere statement that there is a pure-impure opposition connected to caste is at best descriptive; it is hardly analytic" (Dundes 1997, 133). Even before the publication of *Homo Hierarchicus* in 1966, McKim Marriott had succinctly noted this tautological problem in discussing the relationship of caste and pollution: "A caste is said to be considered high if its characteristic way of life is judged to be high and pure, or low if its way of life is judged to be low and polluted" (Marriott 1959, 92). That is, pollution or purity does not by itself induce high or low status, nor is it simply a mark of status; on the contrary, it involves a judgment—an active ideological assessment on the part of a particular social group of another group. The site of this ideological activity, I suggest, is narrative: as the subsequent chapters will explore, the assessment of bodily pollution and low status is not at all automatic in the Viśvāmitra legends, and leads to situations where the śāstraic vision of *varṇa* is repeatedly problematized.

[10] For some important critiques and reassessments of Dumont's purity/pollution complex, see Milner 1994, Das and Uberoi 1971, Raheja 1988b, Quigley 1993, Parry 1980, Heesterman 1985, and Fuller 1979.

Perhaps influenced by Mary Douglas' comparative analysis of pollution as a worldwide symbol of low status expressing 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966), a number of scholars have begun to rethink purity and pollution in terms of spaces and boundaries.[11] For some, purity is not an absolute construct, but a metaphoric quality of domestic space, while pollution is a result of movement from the public setting into the domestic. Murray Milner, Jr., for example, associates purification with the cleansing of domestic space, of "moving dirt from private to public areas" (Milner 1987, 67).[12] In the other direction, Dundes has observed that "in the Indian context, it is critical to avoid the contamination from any 'dirt' from outside in order to prevent defiling the 'clean' inside" (Dundes 1997, 81).[13] In addressing Dumont's purity vs. pollution binary, there has been a great urge among theorists to find another, more essential process organizing traditional Indian society, and not a few scholars have postulated variants of domesticity—boundaries of interior/exterior space, center-periphery, and so on—to be the social structure that is really at the heart of caste.

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[11] For example, David Mandelbaum emphasized that children learn concepts of purity and pollution through domestic activities, and that "the household is the scene of stricter purity observance than is the village outside" (Mandelbaum 1968, 35). François Chenet has thought of caste as a 'psychoniche' in which individuals "can live in the domestic luxury of the habitual" (Chenet 1989, 130). For parallel formulations, see also C. J. Fuller's 'purity gradient' within the religious space of the temple (Fuller 1979, 465), as well as Dirks's likening of hierarchical formations (caste) to a "logic of variable proximity to the king" (Dirks 1989, 67).

[12] In another work, Milner gives a lengthy demonstration of this correlation between spatial ordering, purity, and caste:

> Certainly there are many instances of the use of this metaphor in the Indian caste system: ... the seating arrangements at public events; the layout of homes, with the kitchen being the most pure and restricted area, while bedrooms, courtyards, and latrine areas steadily increase in both impurity and accessibility to outsiders; the physical organization of villages, with the lowest status groups being relegated to the margins of the settlement area; the layout of temples, with the areas becoming increasingly sacred as one moves toward the inner sanctum. (Milner 1994, 110)

[13] Other scholars have said the same thing. Fréderique Marglin claims that pollution is a result of crossing boundaries of an inviolable whole (Marglin 1977, 265), while Milner asserts, "Inappropriate relations or movements across social boundaries are 'automatically' sanctioned because they result in pollution and impurity" (Milner 1994, 126).

> But this raises another problem. If it is domesticity, and not purity, that orders the South Asian realworld, what then do we do with to the countless textual, ritual, and discursive references to purity and pollution that pervade ancient and contemporary articulations of Indian society? I suggest we have now returned to André Béteille's schism between the 'field-view' and 'book-view' of caste (Béteille 1991)—for despite all these theories, we cannot escape the fact that many normative texts of Indian culture (and particularly those written in Sanskrit), over the course of centuries have made elaborate and sophisticated attempts to organize caste, hierarchically and linearly, through oppositions of pure and impure, and often by theorizing deeper relationships between status and power. Are the *śāstras* just plain wrong? Are they fundamentally a part of a Brahmanic 'book-view,' and simply to be dismissed by the prudent 'field-view' scholar as irrelevant to the study of actual Indian societies? Clearly, the answer is 'no.' Approaching caste as a discursive phenomenon, I believe, allows us to overcome

the barrier between 'book-' and 'field-views' and to avoid another monolithic construction, a *Homo Domesticus*, of which the texts we read are but documentary reflections. That is, in rethinking Dumont we need not be interested in 'explaining away' *varṇa* in favor of the domestic, but in locating sites (in 'books' and 'fields') where it is brought into dialogue with competing folk structuralisms.[14] As a parallel, consider the state of temporary impurity of high-caste women during menstruation, during which traditional Brahman custom insists that they should eat, bathe, and sleep separately, making sure to avoid all physical contact with others (men, women, and children). In Marathi, the technical, śāstraic term for this five-day condition is '*aśaucatā*' ('impurity') or '*aspṛśyatā*' ('untouchability'); however, during my stay in the Maharashtrian city of Pune in the winter of 2000-2001 among members of the Koṅkaṇastha Brahman caste, I repeatedly heard it referred to as '*bāher basaṇe*' ('sitting outside') or '*bāher asaṇe*'

[14] For example, Carter's study of a caste *purāṇa* notices that caste boundaries are formed through the simultaneous operation ('intersection') of *varṇa* hierarchy, "emanating from the ritual domain," and what he terms 'kinship amity,' "emanating from the domestic domain" (Carter 1975, 133).

(‘being outside’).[15] Clearly evoking a domestic understanding of social structure, this folk metaphor stands in semantic equivalence with the śāstraic terms, generating a dialogue in which linguistic choice becomes an issue of gender. In none of the variants of this folk metaphor are specialized Sanskrit terms used, and indeed these words—‘*bāher*,’ ‘*kaḍelā*,’ ‘*dūr*’ (Marathi derivations of the Sanskrit *bahis*, *kaṭa*, *dūra*)—are all everyday Marathi words indicating an exteriorized position. Furthermore, at least according to my informal survey, though women and men are aware of both sorts of expressions, women used the folk metaphor more frequently than men. It is arguable that in the negotiation between classical and folk terminologies, which one is used determines how the menstruating woman is represented and how she represents herself. If women use folklore as strategic self-representation (Raheja and Gold 1994), the fact that users of the folk metaphor also know the classical terms for menstruation indicates that this site where folk and classical meet—that is, the performative utterance of either the folk metaphor or the śāstraic term—is where gender relationships are negotiated.

Though admittedly my amateur sociology requires further investigation into the gender politics between *aśaucatā* and *bāher basaṇe*, it is undeniable that these expressions result in contrasting representations of the menstruating woman—the śāstraic terms present her as an untouchable, while the folk metaphors place her (metaphorically) *outside* of domestic space. In narratives about caste, a similar structural interaction takes place when the predefined, classical structures of *varṇa* are mapped onto the domestic spaces of the storyworld. These physical/social borders are then breached through the

[15] Some variants of this Marathi folk metaphor, as I collected in December 2001—January 2002 from female friends and family members, include: ‘*kaḍelā basaṇe*’ (sitting at the edge) or ‘*dūr basaṇe*’ (sitting at a distance), or, as one Puneri girl announced, in English, as she came into her uncle’s home, “I am in the outs!”

events of the plot, creating ruptures that force the story's audience (performers, listeners, readers, commentators, Indologists) to come to terms with this anomaly. Not coincidentally, these ruptures are also what make it a compelling story. The mechanics of these breaches will be the central question of the next chapter; here, we will discover how this mapping is itself a movement between texts. In the previous chapter, we have discussed the *double-entendre* of the 'intertext' as a linkage from text to text as well as a fluid space of uncertainty between the ideological solids of text; so that we may grasp the implications of intertextuality on *varṇa* representation, we now turn to the legend of Satyavatī in the Sanskrit epics and *purāṇas*.[16]

II. The Satyavatī legend: The birth of Viśvāmitra and Paraśurāma

The most notable figures of epic and purāṇic literature to challenge the Brahman/Kṣatriya boundary are the sages Viśvāmitra and Rāma Jāmadagnya. The latter is today more popularly known as Paraśurāma (literally, 'Rāma of the axe'), and is regarded in later purāṇic and devotional traditions as the seventh *avatāra* (incarnation) of Viṣṇu.[17] While his deification may arguably be a late purāṇic development (Gail 1977, 222), Rāma was indeed a brutal Viṣṇu. Though born a Brahman, he vengefully armed himself with an axe at the wrongful murder of his father Jamadagni at the hands of the king Arjuna Kārtavīrya. He then proceeded to carry out what may rightly be labeled as the bloodiest genocide ever recorded in ancient Indian literature, slaughtering the entirety of the Kṣatriya *varṇa* twenty one times over, and depositing their blood as an offering to

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[16] The first definition follows Genette 1997, while the second is coined by Julia Kristeva, inspired by Bakhtin (see Moi 1986, 36-37), and then hyphenated (as 'inter-text') by Barthes (see Orr 2003, 32-34).

[17] For sake of convenience, I will use 'Paraśurāma' to denote Rāma Jāmadagnya, though this name appears in only one version of the Satyavatī legend (*ViṣṇuP* 4.7.36).

his ancestors (*pitṛs*) in the five lakes called the *Samanta-pañcaka*.[18] Ceasing his fury, he devoted himself to a lifetime of asceticism, along the way teaching his martial arts to many similar, boundary-challenging epic characters, including the *Mahābhārata's* Bhīṣma, Karṇa, and Droṇa.[19] The biographical legends of these two closely-related, counter-normative sages, appearing in texts that consider themselves the 'fifth Veda,' invariably raise compelling questions about the śāstraic vision of *varṇa* as an overarching system of watertight human categories;[20] Viśvāmitra in particular becomes iconic of self-determination and resistance in the Sanskrit epics and *purāṇas*.[21]

In this chapter, we turn to one legend that connects these two characters together by means of a genealogy. The epic and purāṇic Satyavatī legend provides an authoritative account of the sages' origins, while also responding to the questions they raise of *varṇa* hierarchy. Though not the only legend that tries to rationalize their counter-normativity, the Satyavatī legend is certainly the most widespread;[22] it continues to be a popular

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[18] The primary narratives of Paraśurāma may be found in the *Mahābhārata* (3.115-117, 12.48-49); see Gail 1977 for a complete discussion of purāṇic variants. Goldman advocates a strong psychoanalytic connection between these two sages, seeing them as symbolizing "the juxtaposition of the roles of the father (brahman) and son (warrior) in a single individual at the same time" (Goldman 1978, 341). On the shared motif of (magic) cow-theft, Goldman notes, "efforts on the part of filial or quasi-filial figures to forcibly appropriate this symbol of fecundity, nurturance and motherhood against the wishes of the old man who keeps her to himself always meet with disaster in the epic" (Goldman 1978, 340).

[19] Some purāṇic sources and oral traditions also attribute the geographical creation of the Western Indian (Konkan, Tuluva, and Kerala) coastlines to Paraśurāma (Janaki 1966, 62-72). For analyses of the legends of Paraśurāma, the other Bhārgavas, and 'Bhṛguization,' see Janaki 1966, Goldman 1977, Gail 1977, Minkowski 1991, Hiltebeitel 1999a, Fitzgerald.

[20] The *purāṇas* are designated as the 'fifth Veda' fairly early in Sanskrit literature, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.1.2, 4; 2.1; 7.1). See Fitzgerald 1985, Rocher 1986, 13-17 for more discussion on the supplementarity of *purāṇas* to Vedic literature.

[21] He is, as Philip Lutgendorf remarks, "the original self-made man" (Lutgendorf, personal communication, October 2003).

[22] Another notable legend dealing with the birth of these two sages is the dialogue between the Bhārgava sage Cyavana (the great-grandfather of Paraśurāma) and the king Kuśika (Viśvāmitra's grandfather). This legend is found in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 13.52-56) and has been translated and analyzed by Goldman (Goldman 1977, 67-72). Unlike the past-oriented Satyavatī, the Kuśika-Cyavana legend is, in a sense, future-oriented, placed a generation beforehand, and providing an explanation, from Cyavana's Bhārgava perspective of how "through the hostility between the brahmans and the kṣatriyas a mixing of the races will

narrative retold in religious performance contexts, such as Marathi *kīrtans* and *pravacans*, particularly since it details the birth the seventh *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (Pathak 1980, 188).[23]

The story of Satyavatī is told nine times in the corpus of epic and purāṇic literature, and for the most part, the tellings share a number of verses and exhibit remarkably little variation of plot.[24] The most divergent of these is also the most recent: the lengthy, seventeenth-century telling of the *Skanda Purāṇa's Nāgarakhaṇḍa* (*SkandaP* 6.165-166), the significance of which will become apparent momentarily.[25] The brief *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* version (*BhāgavataP* 9.15.5-12) is most likely a condensation from an earlier, lengthier *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* version.[26] Apart from these two, it should be assumed that because of their practically verbatim nature, the individual versions of this narrative are conscious borrowings—and not synopses, retellings, or 'naturally' evolved parallels.[27] As a result, we may venture to say that the variation between these tellings is ideological;

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occur" (*Mbh* 13.55.12; translation, Goldman 1977, 68), and how "Brahmanhood will come to [Kuśika] in the third generation" (*Mbh* 13.56.36; translation, Goldman 1977, 71).

[23] The Satyavatī legend appears in the fourth volume of the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī*, perhaps the most widely read collection of *nāradīya kīrtans* (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 54-71).

[24] It is narrated in *BhāgavataP* 9.15.5-12; *BrahmaP* 10.23-68; *BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.32-68; *Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 24-120; *Mbh* 12.49; *Mbh* 13.4; *SkandaP* (*Nāgarakhaṇḍa*) 6.165-166; *VāyuP* 91.62-96; and *ViṣṇuP* 4.7.12-36. For a comparison of verses from a subset of these versions, see Gail 1977, 231.

[25] The *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* portion of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, in which the Satyavatī legend is found, has been placed by Ludo Rocher in seventeenth-century Gujarat (Rocher 1986, 234).

[26] It is common to date the *Bhāgavata* to the ninth or tenth century C. E. (see Hardy 1983, Brown 1990, 219-225, Shulman 1993, 121, Hardy 1993, 170, Rocher 1986, 147-151) R. C. Hazra dates the *Viṣṇu* to "most probably in the last quarter of the 3rd or the first quarter of the 4th century A.D." (Hazra 1975, 175). Friedhelm Hardy notes that "the *Bhāgavata's* recourse to the classical *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* thus initiated a process of major theological transformation" (Hardy 1993, 171).

[27] A precise trace of this text-history is difficult; however, accepting Gail's plea "for the priority of the Purāṇic tradition!" (Gail 1977, 221), one might conjecture that the versions found in Willibald Kirfel's reconstructed *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa* (Kirfel 1927)—i.e., the 'oldest' material from the *Brahma*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Harivaṁśa*, and *Vāyu Purāṇas*—predate the epic versions, which in turn come before those found in the *Skanda*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*. The materials analyzed in this dissertation do support the shaky notion that the *vaṁśānucarita* sections of these four texts belong to the earliest strata of purāṇic literature.

that is, these are nine distinct textual performances of the same story, and exhibit differences because the performers *wanted* them to exhibit differences.

The plot of the legend proceeds as follows. The king Kuśika,[28] a descendant of the famed king Jahnu (genitor of Jāhnavī, the river Gaṅgā) was the ruler of the land known as Kānyakubja,[29] but after many years found himself without heir. He decided to perform *tapas* (ascetic practice) in order to have a son. Impressed by his ascetic fervor, the god Indra himself became incarnate as his son Gādhi.[30] King Gādhi was also unable to produce a son, but had a beautiful daughter named Satyavatī, who caught the eye of the Bhārgava sage Ṛcīka.[31]

Smitten by her beauty, the powerful Brahman asked Gādhi for his daughter's hand in marriage, and (in some versions) was told that according to custom he needed to first procure a seemingly impossible bride-price—one thousand pure white horses, fast as the wind, and each having one black ear. To Gādhi's surprise, Ṛcīka easily accomplished this by the grace of the god Varuṇa.[32] After the couple was wedded, Ṛcīka prepared two

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[28] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* reads 'Kuśanābha' (*VāyuP* 91.62), while the *Bhāgavata* calls him 'Kuśambu' (*BhāgavataP* 9.15.4).

[29] The kingdom of Kānyakubja, known today as Kannauj, was so named due to Vāyu's curse upon the one hundred daughters of its king Kuśanābha. When they declined his marriage proposal without the prior approval of their father, Vāyu cursed them to be deformed (*kubja*). They were later restored due to the power of (and marriage to) the Brahman Brahmadatta (*Rām* 1.31-33). This narrative might also be thought of as a birth-legend of Viśvāmitra, and like the Satyavatī legend it infuses an earlier *anuloma varṇa*-intermixture in the sage's genealogy to normativize his behavior.

[30] Gādhi is known as Gāthin in Vedic literature. The motif of Indra's incarnation as Gādhi is found in five versions: the *Harivaṁśa* (*HV Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 24-33), the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.32-35), the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (*VāyuP* 91.62-65), the *Brahma Purāṇa* (*BrahmaP* 10.23-27), and the *Śānti Parvan* (*Mbh* 12.49.3-6). The *Anuśāsana Parvan* version asserts that Kuśika's "radiance was equal to that of thousand-eyed Indra" (*Mbh* 13.4.5). Neither confirming nor denying Gādhi's divinity, the others simply begin with Satyavatī's marriage.

[31] These events are mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Rām* 1.32-33), but the Satyavatī legend is not told.

[32] The bride price subplot is found in four versions: *Mbh* 13.4.8-20, *ViṣṇuP* 4.7.12-16, *BhāgavataP* 9.15.5-7, *SkandaP* 6.165.11-36, 6.166.1-5. Four lines in the manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa* labeled "K_4" also narrate the bride-price event (*Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, 3**), though they are relegated to the apparatus in its Critical Edition. The *SkandaP's* elaborate telling of this subplot declares this bride price to be seven hundred such

carus (sacred concoctions of rice), one infused with Brahman-essence and the other with Kṣatriya-essence, to ensure the fertility of both his wife Satyavatī and her mother, so that he and his Kṣatriya father-in-law Gādhi might be able to continue their lineages.[33] Ṛcīka then departed to perform *tapas* in the forest.

Meanwhile, Gādhi and his wife came to visit their daughter during a *tīrtha* (sacred ford) pilgrimage, and she relayed them the wonderful news, showing her mother what her husband had done. However, either because of fate or due to her mother's contrivance (depending on the version), the *carus* were switched.[34] Ṛcīka, through his mystic power—'*dhyāna-yogena*' (*Mbh* 12.49.17)—was able to ascertain the situation and confronted his wife. He explained that through his *tapas*, he had infused the two *carus* respectively with the essences of Brahmanhood and Kṣatriyahood; due to her reversal, she would now give birth to a child of Kṣatriya *tejas* ('energy' or 'essence') while her mother would produce a boy with Brahman *tejas*.[35] Satyavatī, horrified at this prospect, appealed to Ṛcīka to allow her (and his) misfortune be deferred for one generation, and this quasi-curse was transferred to their grandson. She then gave birth to Jamadagni (and, in some versions, two other sons, including Śunaḥśepa) and transformed herself, curiously, into the river

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horses (*SkandaP* 6.165.31) It is suggestive to note that, apart from the *Harivaṁśa*, these tellings are *not* found in precisely the versions that declare Gādhi to be Indra incarnate.

[33] In *Mbh* 13.4.27, Satyavatī and her mother were also told to respectively embrace the *udumbara* ('ficus') and *aśvattha* ('fig') trees. At *SkandaP* 6.166.15-18, Ṛcīka instructed the pair to embrace, respectively, the *aśvattha* and *nyagrodha* trees.

[34] The versions of this legend found in the *BrahmaP* (10.36-37), *BrahmāṇḍaP* (2.3.66.44-46), *VāyuP* (91.74-75), and the *Harivaṁśa* (*Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 53-56) explicitly suggest that the mix-up was on account of fate, while the *Śānti Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* is ambiguous on this point. The *Anusanana Parvan* version (*Mbh* 13.4.30-40), as well as the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (4.7.20-23), *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (9.15.9), and the *Skanda Purāṇa* (6.166.20-26) assert the intentionality of her mother, as well as Satyavatī's own complicity in the *caru*-switching. Again, aside from the *Harivaṁśa*, these are the same complementary sets involved in the embedding of the Indra incarnation and the bride-price motifs.

[35] For a discussion of the connections between *varṇa* and the power-category of *tejas* in Sanskrit literature, see Jarrod Whitaker's articles (Whitaker 2000, 2002).

Kauśikī.[36] This tranformation acts perhaps as a symbolic return to her pre-marital, Kṣatriya home, since 'Kauśikī' is a name derived from her paternal grandfather Kuśika.[37] Her son Jamadagni later married Reṇukā, daughter of the king Reṇu, and to the couple was born a son named Rāma, a Brahman of Kṣatriya *tejas*.[38] Satyavatī's mother, meanwhile, gave birth to Viśvāmitra, and some versions go on to mention his adoption of Ṛcīka's middle son, Śunaḥśepa, rescued from the human sacrifice of king Hariścandra, further intertwining the Bhārgava and Kauśika family trees (*gotras*).[39]

This intertwining is what Hardy terms a 'purāṇic process' (Hardy 1993, 163): by binding their Brahman families together through genealogy, the Satyavatī legend constructs a legitimate, counter-normative category in which to place these both personalities. After hearing the Satyavatī legend, both sages 'make sense.' Thus, the legend provides an answer for the questions of *varṇa* raised by their other legends—quite

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[36] While in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the Kauśikī most likely flows down from the Himālayas into the Gaṅgā (see Goldman 1984, 349), it is identified with the modern-day Kosi, whose rapidly-changing course makes it the "Sorrow of Bihar." The Kosi courses from Tibet, through Nepal, Bihar, and into the Ganges east of Patna. However, there are various other Kauśikī Rivers in the subcontinent, including an alternate name for the river Viśvāmitrī flowing through the modern Gujarati city of Baroda, of which was composed in the seventeenth-century text known alternatively as the *Viśvāmitrī-* or *Kauśikī-māhātmya* (Thaker 1997, 14). This text largely deals with the Triśaṅku narrative (see Chapter Four).

[37]This concept of a maiden name is, admittedly, a Western imposition I am placing on the purāṇic legend, and it is not at all rare to see illustrious purāṇic women retain their patronymics—e.g., Draupadī, Kaikeyī, Jānakī, Pārvatī. However, it is important to note that Satyavatī is not called 'Kauśikī' until *after* her change-of-state "Rāma, I have an older sister, true to her vows, named Satyavatī, who was married off to Ṛcīka. Following her husband, she went bodily into heaven, where she was transformed into the supremely exalted great river Kauśikī (*pūrvajā bhaginī cāpi mama rāghava suvratā* | *nāmnā satyavatī nāma ṛcīke pratipāditā* ‖ *saśarīrā gatā svargaṁ bhartāram anuvartinā* | *kauśikī paramodārā sā pravṛttā mahānadī* ‖)" (*Rām* 1.33.7-8). Satyavatī's transformation into the river Kauśikī (*Ram* 1.33.1-13) is found in neither *Mahābhārata* versions, nor in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, though in the *Mahābhārata*, Viśvāmitra was said to have attained Brahmanhood on the banks of the Kauśikī (*Mbh* 3.85.9).

[38] The birth of Rāma Jāmadagnya is unmentioned in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* version.

[39] The Śunaḥśepa episode is mentioned in the *BrahmaP* (10.54, 63-66), *BrahmāṇḍaP* (2.3.66.64-68), *VāyuP* (91.92-96), *ViṣṇuP* (4.7.37), and *Harivaṁśa* (*Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 90-120) versions. One manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa* ('K_4') is rather elaborate in its retelling of the Śunaḥśepa episode, details Viśvāmitra's curse of his fifty elder sons when they refuse to acknowledge Śunaḥśepa's position as eldest (*Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 6**, 7**). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (9.16) also affixes a more detailed account of Śunaḥśepa. The *Anuśāsana Parvan* also includes a lengthy list of all of the sons of Viśvāmitra (*Mbh* 13.4.48-58).

literally so in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* as Bhīṣma uses it to answer Yudhiṣṭhira's query: how did Viśvāmitra, a Kṣatriya, "become a Brahman without taking on another body" (*Mbh* 13.3.17)? The śāstraic answer, "He was *born* that way," deflates the counter-normative implications of Viśvāmitra's accomplishments, and, indeed, the need for Bhīṣma even to tell the rest of the cycle.

In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the Satyavatī legend appears twice—first, as a lengthy narrative told by the Sūta (the purāṇic narrator) in the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* (6.165-166), initiating an elaborate narration of Viśvāmitra's ascent to Brahmanhood. As we shall see, it has close connections with the *Mahābhārata's* telling. A bit later in the *Skanda*, however, the legend reappears as an allusion injected into the plot of the *kāmadhenu* legend. As a vengeful Viśvāmitra tried to force his way into Brahmanhood, the god Brahmā was obliged to pose precisely the same question that Yudhiṣṭhira had asked—"How can one born as a Kṣatriya become a Brahman? How can you express this desire that is contrary to *śruti* (Vedic texts) and *smṛti* (legal/moral texts)? On the surface of this earth, that which isn't natural shall never be" (*SkandaP* 6.168.18). At this point, however, Ṛcīka himself stepped out from amongst the throngs of sages, and explained to Brahma that because of the power of his *caru*, Viśvāmitra was already a Brahman who had taken a Kṣatriya birth (*SkandaP* 6.168.22).[40] With this revelation, Brahma confidently declared Viśvāmitra to be a Brahman, and the crisis was averted.[41]

[40] Ṛcīka's cameo appearance is unique to the *Skanda Purāṇa's* narration of the *kāmadhenu* legend. In most other versions, such as the Valmiki *Rāmāyaṇa*'s (*Ram* 1.64), the extremity of his *tapas*, as well as sometimes a *tīrtha* (e.g., *Mbh* 9.39), is enough to induce Brahma's declaration of Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood (or, more precisely, his status as a *brahmarṣi*).

[41] In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, Vasiṣṭha is steadfast in his denial of Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood: Full of anger, he declares: "I will never say this, Grandfather, even though I know him to be a Brahman arisen out of a

Like the *Mahābhārata's Anuśāsana Parvan*, the *Skanda Purāṇa* uses the Satyavatī legend to explain that Viśvāmitra's later deeds are not a product of his own volition, but a natural expression of the *varṇa*-based essence that is pervading his body and that has created him. Unlike the *Mahābhārata's* question-and-answer frame structure, the *Skanda Purāṇa* injects the Satyavatī legend into the storyline straight from the mouth of its Brahman protagonist, Ṛcīka, further emphasizing the fact that this legend is used to normativize Viśvāmitra's behavior. In both instances, embedding the legend becomes a way for purāṇic texts to reinforce the śāstraic governance of *varṇa* over *jāti*: the underlying *varṇa*-essences infused into Ṛcīka's two *carus* are responsible for the mixed-up births (*jātis*) of the two sages. Rather than a natural usage of śāstraic categories, I suggest that this appearance of normativity is in fact a conscious *re*-structuration of a dangerous narrative. That is, the textual performance of the Satyavatī legend—how it is framed and presented as a subnarrative within the larger epic and purāṇic text—is what ultimately defuses the threats to *varṇa* discourse raised by these two icons of self-determination and individual will, Viśvāmitra and Paraśurāma. Such a strategy of narrative framing also attributes their boundary-crossings to the power of the *bona fide* Brahman Ṛcīka, reinforcing the supremacy of Brahman power.

How successful are these textual performances? In the literary history of the Satyavatī legend, as well as in its contemporary reception, the normativization does not appear to be complete, because we are able to locate places where the individual tellings diverge, producing slippages in the narratives' representations of *varṇa*. As we have

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Kṣatriya through the grace of Ṛcīka, and even though you have said it, my Lord" (*SkandaP* 6.168.28-29). We examine the fallout of these continued hostilities more carefully in the next chapter.

already noted, there are three significant moments of plot variation between the nine epic and purāṇic versions. First, the *Anuśāsana Parvan*, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* versions all include (with differing levels of detail) a subplot in which Gādhi insists Ṛcīka must produce a seemingly impossible bride price before he may marry Satyavatī.[42] Second, while the other set of versions suggests that the *caru* reversal took place because of fate or chance, these same four versions insist that it was done intentionally, so that Satyavatī's mother may give birth to the better son. Third, it is precisely the other five tellings—the *Śānti Parvan*, *Harivaṁśa*, *Brahma Purāṇa*, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, *Vāyu Purāṇa*—that include the motif of Indra's incarnation as Satyavatī's father, Gādhi.

As a result, we notice two distinct clusters within these nine versions, and the variance between them seems to be due to a difference in focalization that is most easily seen through a direct comparison of the two *Mahābhārata* versions.[43] We have already noted that Bhīṣma tells the *Anuśāsana Parvan* version in order to explain Viśvāmitra's self-transformation—as he explains in the end, "in this way, the mighty ascetic Viśvāmitra was no longer a Kṣatriya, for the *brahman* placed within him by Ṛcīka was stronger" (*Mbh* 13.4.59). In the *Śānti Parvan*, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva narrates the Satyavatī story to the Pāṇḍavas so that he may tell them "about Rāma, and the events of his birth, as the *maharṣis* tell them" (*Mbh* 12.49.1). In other words, the former is Viśvāmitra-

[42] The bride-price motif also occurs, as we have noted above, in one manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa* version.
[43] 'Focalization' is a narratological term coined by Gérard Genette (Genette 1980, 186, cited in Herman 2002, 301). As Herman explains, "whereas the question 'Who speaks?' pertains to narration, the question 'Who sees?' pertains to what Genette proposed to call *focalization*" (Herman 2002, 301). In the case of purāṇic legends, told through a limited third-person perspective, I twist this question around to ask, 'What does the narrator see?'—that is, 'What is the audience meant to see?'

centered and the latter is Paraśurāma-centered, and as we shall see, this performance-level divergence points to ideological negotiation.

The Viśvāmitra-centered narratives include the bride-price motif, in which the Brahman Ṛcīka is obliged to participate in a Kṣatriya domestic tradition.[44] The *Skanda Purāṇa* version has it that Ṛcīka initially spied Satyavatī at a *tīrtha*, as he was performing austerities and she had come out from the palace in order to perform a *gaurī-pūjā* (a devotional ritual to the Goddess) (*SkandaP* 6.165.12-22). He fell immediately and desperately in love, and entered Gādhi's court to ask for her hand in marriage. Hearing his request,

> King Gādhi became agitated in fear. Considering him to be of unequal *varṇa*, and poor and old, he nonetheless feared a curse if he did not give her to him, and so he declared a prerequisite: "Among us, a bride price is customary when giving a daughter, great Brahman. So if you give it to me, I will undoubtedly grant you my daughter." (*SkandaP* 1.165.28)

At this moment in the story, the hierarchical model of *varṇa* experiences a rupture due its mapping onto domestic space—rather than assuming a presupposed relationship of dominance, the Brahman Ṛcīka is obliged to acquiesce to the internal customs of the Kṣatriya *varṇa*.[45] Though this set of versions does not deny the existence of *varṇa*, it presents an alternative to its hierarchical nature—Gādhi does not consider Ṛcīka as his direct superior, but of 'unequal *varṇa*' ('*asavarṇa*'), and fears not Ṛcīka's status but his

[44] This is in contrast to the numerous epic and purāṇic examples of *niyoga*, a śāstraically permitted (and condemned) practice (Kane 1990, 50-51), in which a Brahman is called upon by a king to sleep with his queen and produce an heir for the king, and which takes place in a significant narrative of Viśvāmitra's rival, the orthodox sage Vasiṣṭha. In the story of Kalmāṣapāda (*Mbh* 1.166-168), after Vasiṣṭha restores the status of the king cursed to be a cannibalistic *rākṣasa* (demon), he is invited by Kalmāṣapāda into his inner quarters (*antaḥpura*) to engage in *niyoga* with his queen Adṛṣyantī, thereby producing his heir Asmaka (*Mbh* 1.168.21-25); the subtleties of this story will be taken up in the next chapter.

[45] The story then details how this powerful character is able to accomplish this seemingly impossible task (the grace of Varuṇa and the productivity of the Aśvatīrtha). While it is a standard purāṇic technique to account for miraculous events through the power of a *tīrtha*, it only reinforces the sentiment that it was quite an extraordinary feat for Ṛcīka to penetrate the Kṣatriya domestic boundary and marry Satyavatī.

curse—more a symptom of his accumulated *tapas* as a *ṛṣi* ('sage') than of any general property of the Brahmanhood. In other words, Gādhi asks for a bride price because Ṛcīka is Ṛcīka, not because Ṛcīka is a Brahman.

The inclusion of this motif in the Viśvāmitra-centered versions in the *Anuśāsana Parvan*, *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* goes hand-in-hand with an ascription of blame to Satyavatī's mother in the fateful switching of the *carus*. Though the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* merely states that "her mother asked Satyavatī for her own *caru*, thinking that it was better" (*BhāgP* 9.15.9), the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is more descriptive:

> Her mother said to Satyavatī, "My daughter, everyone always desires that his own son have the best qualities, and is not mindful of his own wife's brother's qualities. And so please give me your *caru* and take mine to use for yourself. My son will have to protect the entire sphere of this world—what use is acquisition of strength and power for a Brahman?" (*ViṣṇuP* 4.7.20-23)

The mother urges Satyavatī to switch the *caru*s, disregarding Ṛcīka's commands. Suggesting that Ṛcīka is 'not mindful of his wife's brother's qualities,' her assertion sets up a conflict between Satyavatī's domestic and śāstraic duties. According to śāstraic injunction, Satyavatī ought to obey the command of her Brahman husband, but her mother makes it clear that since Ṛcīka belongs to another family, and that since Satyavatī has a greater obligation to her own, Kṣatriya, family, she ought to let her mother have the more powerful *caru*—which her husband would naturally have given to Satyavatī—so that her brother might become distinguished ('*viśiṣṭa*') (*Mbh* 13.4.33). At the same time, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa's* telling, Satyavatī's mother specifically ties her argument to *varṇa*, insisting that "strength and power" are of more use to a Kṣatriya, who must "protect the entire sphere of the world," than to a Brahman. Through such a statement, the *Viṣṇu*

Purāṇa maps (and throws into question) a presupposed, śāstraic notion of Kṣatriya *varṇa* onto the domestic space of Satyavatī and her parents.

The juxtaposition of these two lines of reasoning, one domestic and one śāstraic, in the mother's arguments for *caru*-switching may therefore be heard as a Kṣatriya voice contesting classical *varṇa* through an appeal to domestic identity. I am not arguing here for a deeper residue of any authentically Kṣatriya voice, as Frederick Pargiter argued (Pargiter 1922), nor of a Brahmanic colonization of the Kṣatriya mind, as Marxist purāṇic studies might imply (Chakrabarti 2001). Instead, I would like to understand what the narratologist David Herman calls a 'direct hypothetical focalization' emergent from the story itself (Herman 2002, 322). That is, the Kṣatriya voice is not something that the (hypothetical) original composer of the legend necessarily intended for the audience to hear, but something that becomes a central issue in textual performances that focalize on Viśvāmitra. Furthermore, just as Gādhi's hopes to resist Brahman dominance are dashed upon Ṛcīka's easy acquisition of the bride price, this Kṣatriya voice does not last long in the Viśvāmitra-centered narratives, as Ṛcīka vehemently condemns Satyavatī's mix-up as well as her mother's tampering with his work.

It must be noted that Ṛcīka objects to Satyavatī's actions in both sets of versions. However, in every Paraśurāma-centered version, Ṛcīka declares, "You have been tricked [*vyaṁsitā*] by your mother, my dear" (*Mbh* 12.49.18).[46] Since it is precisely in these versions that the reason for the *caru*-switch is either left unnarrated, or ascribed to 'fate' ('*daiva*'), Ṛcīka's divinations ('*dhyānayoga*') act as an assertion of blame: it is the

[46] This phrase, "*matrāsi vyaṁsitā bhadre*," appears in *Mbh* 12.49.18, *Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, No. 6B, 59-60, *BrahmaP* 10.39, *BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.47, and *VāyuP* 91.77, whereas in the Viśvāmitra-centered *Anuśāsana Parvan*, he acknowledges that her actions were done "out of love for her mother [*matṛsnehena*]" (*Mbh* 13.4.40).

Kṣatriya woman's 'trick' that results in the *varṇa* intermixture, and the absent Kṣatriya voice of Satyavatī's mother is unable to contest the judgment. The Viśvāmitra-centered narratives, on the other hand, view this situation in reverse, and the mother's rationalization leads to what Ramanujan has called "a presence of reflexive worlds" (Ramanujan 1991b, 54)—of a Kṣatriya-centered vision of the boundaries of *varṇa* engaging in a dialogue with the normative, Brahman-centered one.[47]

The basic structural problem that impels the telling of the Satyavatī legend (and, indeed, the writing of this dissertation) is simple—how can an individual change his *varṇa*? In all nine Viśvāmitra- and Paraśurāma-centered tellings, the answer involves a mapping: a superposition of the śāstraic notion of *varṇa* onto the folk structures of domesticity within the storyworld. The question of *varṇa* then becomes a matter of reconciling body and space—and the legend's reason for both Viśvāmitra's (physical) movement into Brahman space and Paraśurāma's (behavioral) movement out of it involves the earlier skewed migrations of Ṛcīka's two *carus* improperly into the bodies of Satyavatī and her mother, and the Brahman and Kṣatriya homes in which they reside. The transgression, or inversion ('*vyatyāsa*') of *varṇa* is therefore said to be a result of Ṛcīka's sacred power infused in these two *carus*, and not the individual will of the two sages. The legend thus transfoms the question of rigidity of *varṇa* into a question of how Ṛcīka's *carus* become switched. Due to their different focalizations, the two sets of versions then act as two voices in conversation about how this *caru*-switch could have happened. The Paraśurāma-centered versions, seeking primarily to explain Rāma Jāmadagnya's Kṣatriya-like behavior—and not a physical transformation—are therefore content with

[47] For more on changes of perspective in epic and purāṇic literature, see Goldman 1972.

ascribing the blame squarely on the tricks of Ṛcīka's mother-in-law, through a narrative strategy not surprising to the folklorist.[48] The Viśvāmitra-centered versions are a bit more complicated.

In the legends focusing on Viśvāmitra's bodily transformation, the mother-in-law's devices are presented as a maneuver of active resistance, of a Kṣatriya claim to power, the need for which arises from Ṛcīka's initial penetration of Kṣatriya domestic space (or, from the other point of view, Satyavatī's departure). Through these two narrative devices—the bride price subplot and the theme of Satyavatī's mother's intentionality—emerges an ideological intertext, a 'free' space between śāstraic categories where a counter-normative voice may be heard, and where it becomes undecidable, *a priori*, whether this legend represents a Brahman or Kṣatriya point of view.[49] In this way, the Viśvāmitra-centered set of versions produces a plural text of the Satyavatī legend, but it is a plurality that is entirely dependent on performance context—the focalization with which the narrator tells the story.

While it is perfectly understandable that different texts to present the same subnarrative differently over the course of ten to fifteen centuries of literary history, this fact alone does not sufficiently explain why they should *choose* to do so. Why, for example, did the *Skanda Purāṇa* include the *Mahābhārata's* Viśvāmitra-centered version

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[48] The motif of the conniving mother-in-law ordinarily appears in what Ramanujan has described as 'female-centered' folktales, and even then it is usually the husband's mother who comes into conflict with the new bride, as she enters into a previously sealed domestic space (see Ramanujan 1999b, Ramanujan 1999a). It is true that examples of male conflicts with mothers-in-law are relatively rare in folktales.

[49] The third site of motif-variation, the incarnation of Indra as Gādhi in the Paraśurāma-centered versions, seems less to do with caste, though perhaps the apotheosis of his grandfather is a distancing of Paraśurāma's problematic Kṣatriya lineage. As Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty has discussed, the *Yogavasiṣṭha* knows of a Gādhi as a Brahman who becomes a Caṇḍāla, and then a king, in a dream (O'Flaherty 1984, 134-135), suggesting a further displacement of Gādhi's Kṣatriyahood. The *Yogavasiṣṭha's* Gādhi legend is complementary to the Hariścandra legend, which we examine in Chapter Five.

and not the Paraśurāma-centered one, when its compilers were surely, by the seventeenth century, aware of both? How did its composers, and consequently its users (that is, its audience), thereby participate in this ongoing discussion on the nature of caste? And why did they do it? In the case of ancient texts it is impossible to answer these questions conclusively, we do know where to look for answers: in the context of purāṇic performance—that is, how and why the story is told when it is told.[50] Of course, today's performances of these narratives take place in a vastly different historical context than the composition of epic and purāṇic texts. However, we have seen that over nearly two millennia the texts themselves have not changed a great deal, and, I conjecture, neither have the ways in which they interact with discourses during a performance. In order to shed light on how the dynamics of performance produce the text of a narrative, and in order to see how the intertextualities of the purāṇic Satyavatī legend are received and actively negotiated in a modern religious context, and, indeed, why such a story is told at all, we now turn to its contemporary performance in *nāradīya kīrtan*.

III. Satyavatī in performance: Kīrtan and homology

The Satyavatī legend is a popular narrative in *nāradīya kīrtan*, often told as the birth-legend of Paraśurāma, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. It appears in the first volume of the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 54-71), and we will compare this version to how Vaman Kolhatkar told it in Narad Mandir. After initiating his Viśvāmitra *kīrtans* with two days of the Kānyakubja narrative, Kolhatkar began the Satyavatī legend on

[50] For discussions of the production of *purāṇas*, see the work of Giorgio Bonnazoli (Bonazzoli 1979, Bonazzoli 1981, Bonazzoli 1983b, Bonazzoli 1983a), Hardy (Hardy 1993), as well as Ludo Rocher (Rocher 1986, 49-59, Rocher 1994. For the epics, see Hiltebeitel 2001, Brockington 1998, Goldman 1984, Goldman 1996.

December 2, 2000, continuing through part of the next day's *kīrtan*. These two days were at a crucial point in his month-long residency at Nārad Mandir, for it was in these *kīrtans* that Kolhatkar, negotiating between Vedic *ṛṣi* (sage) and medieval *sant* (saint), and between the discourses of *dharma* and *bhakti*, established himself as an at once authoritative and critical interlocutor between the textual intricacies of his ancient Sanskrit sources and the interests of his contemporary Marathi-speaking Puneri audience.[51] Here, I will investigate how his performance transformed the Satyavatī legend in two specific ways—through the folkloric processes Ramanujan calls 'domesticization' and 'contemporization'—and how he developed a dialogue between *dharma* and *bhakti* around the legend's essentialization of the *ṛṣi's* power (*sāmarthya*) within a physical, sacred substance (Ṛcīka's *caru*).

Though presented orally, Kolhatkar's *uttararaṅgas* were based on Sanskrit sources, and during the *kīrtan*, he explicitly informed his audience that "the story comes from the *Mahābhārata*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000).[52] His *kīrtan* initially described a storyworld that was polarized between the Kṣatriya interior space of the palace and the exterior space of the forest:

> Gādhi ruled the entire kingdom, he became very aged, he ruled for centuries, and he ruled very happily, etc., etc., as is usual. He became aged, but still he had no son. Finally, he became disenchanted and with his wife he went into the forest.

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[51] Since Kolhatkar-*buwā* has been performing *kīrtans* at Nārad Mandir and around Maharashtra for nearly twenty years, and since his father was a household name asa *rāṣṭrīya kīrtankār* in Pune during most of the twentieth century (see Barve 1963, Divekar 1990, Ranade 1984), his reputation for Sanskrit-based dharmic discourse precedes him, and his audience anticipates challenging, scholarly *pūrvaraṅgas* in his performances.

[52] Though it is not uncommon for a *kīrtankār* to make such a claim, Kolhatkar-*buwā* actually does consult epic, purāṇic, Vedic and śāstraic texts, which are stored with care in wooden cabinets at his home. Kolhatkar's version seems to follow the *Anuśāsana's* Viśvāmitra-centered version. In contrast, the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* claims that its "Paraśurāma birth-story has been told in great detail by Vyāsa in the *Ādī Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. Discarding its details, I will now tell this story in brief form" (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 61). It is quite clearly a Paraśurāma-centered version, and based on *Mbh* 12.49, despite its claim.

> Into the forest. After he went to the forest, of course from time to time his ministers would come to visit—he had entrusted the kingdom in the hands of the ministers and left. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000).[53]

Later, when Satyavatī was of marriageable age, "the king became concerned. 'Who should I give her to? ... I am living in the forest. I am living in the forest. Where will I find a good sort of prince [*rājputra*]? This daughter of mine who very much appears like a star, who should I give her to'" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)? Note the repetition here of "I am living in the forest." This echoing, also found in the previous passage, is a technique of *kīrtan* narration through which the *kīrtankār* constructs a focalization. That is, by doubling his utterance that Gādhi is living in the forest instead of the palace, Kolhatkar drew the audience's attention to the detail of space, emphasizing its importance in understanding the story's meaning, and backgrounding other details such as wealth, power, or status.

Thinking of an example to illustrate Gādhi's dilemma, Kolhatkar-*buwā* interjected an extemporaneous aside:

> It is more troublesome to parents if they have a very virtuous [*gunavān*] or special son or daughter in the house. It is better if she is 'medium' [*madhyam*]—if she is too virtuous then it becomes a great predicament. Because you have to find a mate that is suitable for her. Otherwise, for their entire lives someone keeps having to *compromise, *compromise—this problem arises, doesn't it? (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)

Arranging marriages for daughters has been a particular challenge for Brahman households in Pune, particularly in these days of mass transnational migration. Because of educational and employment opportunities, the most eligible bachelors are often in Europe and North America, presenting a situation in which traditionalism is faced with

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[53] The ministers (*amātyas* and *mantrīs*) are presumably Brahmans, and therefore Kolhatkar presents an inversion of domestic spaces—Kṣatriyas in the forest and Brahmans in the palace.

having to "*compromise"– and with four grown-up daughters, it is a scenario that the *kīrtankār* himself has repeatedly encountered. This domesticization allowed the familial concerns of the ancient king Gādhi to resonate with the contemporary lives of ordinary Brahman fathers and mothers in the Nārad Mandir audience. Through these illustrations, the *kīrtan* created a domestic setting, a spatial demarcation that the audience understood as being a *home*, despite being in the forest, and despite it belonging to a king of the Treta *yuga*. Inside this unusually displaced home lived Gādhi, his wife, and his daughter.[54]

Onto this domestic scene, Kolhatkar-*buwā* next mapped the structural (śāstraic) binary of Brahman and Kṣatriya, with the entrance of Ṛcīka the *brahmarṣi*.[55] When Ṛcīka asked Gādhi for his daughter's hand in marriage, Gādhi thought:

> But, he is a Brahman, and I am a Kṣatriya. His eating and drinking is different, my eating and drinking is different, his ways of taking enjoyment [*viśayopabhog*] are different, my ways of taking enjoyment are different. When he sits for *tapaścaryā*, he'll sit for thousands and thousands of years, and for us being Kṣatriya means that today we go here, tomorrow see that *cinema, see this play, take a stroll here, parade around on that elephant, do these battles—this is our daily life [*saṁsār*]. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)

It is important to note that Gādhi's Kṣatriya voice has been transformed by the *kīrtan*. The anachronistic fusion of an indulgent urbanite stereotype onto the Kṣatriyas within the legend blended the traditional definition of Kṣatriyahood—kingship and martial power—with very modern pleasures, creating an amusing situation and provoking laughter from the audience, who easily identified with the appeal of these activities, but also were made

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[54] Not all epic and purāṇic versions of the Satyavatī legend place Gādhi in the forest; in fact, only the *Anuśāsana Parvan* version explicitly does so (*Mbh* 13.4.7), while the *Skanda Purāṇa* places him squarely within his palace (*SkandaP* 6.165.23), whence Satyavatī emerges for doing a *pūjā* (*SkandaP* 6.165.19). The other versions do not discuss this issue.

[55] In the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī*, the Bhārgava sage who asks for Satyavatī is not Ṛcīka but Cyavana, and the father is not Gādhi but Kuśika (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 61). Its version therefore conflates the Satyavatī legend with the lengthy Kuśika-Cyavana legend also told in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 13.52-56; see Goldman 1977, 57-62).

to notice that they were not noble, austere activities for a Brahman. At the same time, rather than presenting a critique of a realworld contemporary Kṣatriya lifestyle, Kolhatkar's distinctively *non*-traditional and *non*-caste stereotype created a boundary around traditional Brahman identity. In other words, Kolhatkar's commentary here is not communal politics, but identity politics, asserting who "we ought to be" rather than who "they are." Rather than detailing authentic behavior patterns of actual purāṇic Kṣatriyas, Kolhatkar's contemporizations questioned the self-indulgent modernity on the part of affluent Puneri Brahmans who, abandoning the austere, śāstraic way of life, of which Kolhatkar-*buwā* faithfully and provocatively offers his own as an example, engage in the frivolous activities of cinema-going, strolling through parks, and theater—activities that have rather uniquely come to define the progressive Puneri (Brahman) urbanite of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Kolhatkar's contemporizations and domesticizations of the bride-price subplot, though done primarily to entertain his audience and provide "color" (*raṅga*) to his *kīrtans*, also enabled him to address his true concern in the *kīrtan*: the nature of Brahmanhood. [56]

But what about Gādhi's bride price? What about the nature of Kṣatriya domesticity which we have seen to be an essential feature of the Viśvāmitra-centered tellings? Kolhatkar explained that Gādhi suggested the bride-price custom as a way to avoid having to marry his daughter off into Brahmanhood, fearing Ṛcīka's curse should he have refused him outright:

> "But how could I say no? Suppose I said no, and then what would happen if he got angry? Oh, since he has internalized all this knowledge, perhaps he will

[56] The notion of *raṅga* is perhaps the most essential generic feature of *kīrtan*, traceable at least to Nāmdev, who declared in a famous *abhaṅga*, "Let us dance, colored by the *kīrtan*, lighting the flame of knowledge across the world! [*nācū kīrtanācẽ raṅgī, jñānadīpa lāvū̃ jagī̃*]" (see Pathak 1980).

> deliver a curse!" And so the king, who was very clever and could think quickly, said, "Great *ṛṣi*, the problem is this, that what you have said to me is indeed true, but we have a family custom. Our family custom is that whoever should present one thousand black-eared (*śyāmakarṇa*) horses, he should be given our daughter." (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)

Because *śyāmakarṇa* horses were so rare, the king thought, "Once I send him off, he'll stay out there. He'll keep scraping away. And since we haven't said anything like, 'We'll wait for you to come back,' we'll find a nice boy before he returns and marry her off, and then everything will be fine" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000). The bride price is not presented as an actual custom of his royal family, but an active invention, a king's trick to avoid a Brahman's curse. By questioning the legitimacy of Gādhi's Kṣatriya domesticity, the *kīrtan* presented the story in a way that controlled the audience's interpretation of the motif, performatively disallowing a Kṣatriya-centered reading.

Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* is therefore reminiscent of the seventeenth-century *Skanda Purāṇa*'s elaborate Viśvāmitra-centered version, in which Gādhi imposed the bride price because he "feared a curse if he did not give her to him" (*Skanda Purāṇa* 6.165.28). While the *Skanda Purāṇa* points out that Gādhi considered Ṛcīka "to be of unequal *varṇa*, and poor and old" (*SkandaP* 6.165.28), and therefore an unsuitable match for the stunningly beautiful Satyavatī, Kolhatkar's Ṛcīka is young and powerful.[57] Pondering Ṛcīka's proposal,

> The king at once was shaken. [He thought,] "He is young, and virtuous, there is no question. He knows all types of knowledge, his *tapaścaryā* is complete, he is still young, and his behavior is of an exalted variety, in other words, he is a *khaṇakhaṇīt rupayā* [a solid rupee]. But, he is a Brahman, I am a Kṣatriya." (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)

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[57] The *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* takes the *Skanda's* approach, suggesting that the king (Kuśika) was afraid of receiving the aged *ṛṣi's* (Cyavana's) curse; however, "Kuśika was very clever. He decided, 'This sagacious Brahman, I should make an obstacle for him using a trick'" (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 62).

Telling the Viśvāmitra-centered version from a Brahman-centered perspective, Kolhatkar's performance did produce a Kṣatriya perspective, but it was one clearly displaced from his own. Though the idea of unequal *varṇa* (*asavarṇa*) appears, Gādhi's voice was presented as desperate and powerless, and Ṛcīka was clearly the hero who overcame the obstacles placed before him, winning the beautiful Satyavatī.[58]

Furthermore, Kolhatkar's Brahman-centered telling sheds light on a boundary crossing that few of the epic and purāṇic versions even care to notice: Satyavatī's entry into the Brahman domestic space of Ṛcīka. Satyavatī is Kṣatriya by birth, but assumes a Brahman lifestyle when she begins to live in Ṛcīka's home.[59] As he explained,

> Though Satyavatī was a Kṣatriya, when she came into the family, she started acting exactly like a Brahman. She has woken up before her husband, has cleaned the house, the floor is mopped with manure—she doesn't go "*Eeee*!"—the manure is spread, the yard is clean, sprinkled with water, the *rāṅgoḷī* is drawn, the *gopadma* is made.[60] The various grasses and so on needed for her husband's *yaśaskarma* are brought, the *yajña* space is made very pure, because the fire is brought in to the house after marriage and is supposed to be serviced for the entire lifetime. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)[61]

The space Kolhatkar describes is strikingly similar to his own home, and to fewer and fewer, it seems, conservative Brahman homes in Pune, where every morning the women of the house sweep and mop the floors, the yard, draw *rāṅgoḷīs* and *gopadmas*,

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[58] We will see a similar displacement of voice in Kolhatkar's telling of the Triśaṅku and Hariścandra legends.

[59] The *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* version suggests only that Cyavana's new bride was very devoted to serving her husband (Moghe and Kemkar 1999, 63).

[60] A '*gopadma*' means literally "cow-lotus," but is here a term denoting a particular decoration of *rāṅgoḷī*, a widespread genre of folk art, involving intricate designs of multi-colored rice powder made at domestic thresholds predominantly by women. Called *kolam* in Tamil, this folk art is the subject of Vijaya Nagarajan's dissertation (Nagarajan 1998; see also Nagarajan 2000).

[61] Kolhatkar's switch into present tense during his *kīrtans* is generally indicative of significant action—he would switch to present tense during battle scenes in the *kāmadhenu* legend, for example, or when Triśaṅku was lifted into heaven. Here, no such dramatic action takes place; instead, he turns to present tense in order to accentuate the habitual, day-to-day nature of Satyavatī's self-transformation.

and so on, and where this maintenance of purity is of utmost importance. However, it is the tension between body and space that is significant here: Satyavatī is lauded because of her ability to override the Kṣatriya demands of her body and behave according to the restrictions imposed by her new Brahman domestic space.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* presents a similar theme. When the *carus* are switched, and Satyavatī and her mother become pregnant, they both exhibit behavior conflicting with the spaces they inhabit.

> Seeing that [Satyavatī's] behavior was filled with the many enjoyments worthy of kingship, and that she had entirely abandoned those activities suitable for Brahmans, [Ṛcīka] angrily said to her, "Damn you, sinner! What have you done? You have switched the *carus* and the trees! Sinner! I ask you, who put you up to this? All who are of Brahman character must avoid the things meant for Kṣatriyas. You've cast off your rags and bark cloth, you've set aside bathing and recitation, and adorned' yourself with all kinds of perfumes—musks and so on. Meanwhile your mother has become self-controlled, devoted to recitation and ritual, engaging in *tīrtha* pilgrimages and taking pleasure in hearing the Vedas. Therefore, there is no doubt that you will have a Kṣatriya son, and that your mother's son will be an eminent Brahman, engrossed in a life of celibate religiosity. (*SkandaP* 6.166.30-36)

In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the physical substances within the two *carus* that will become infused in the bodies of Viśvāmitra and Paraśurāma overpower the wills of the women, and also the laws of the homes in which they live, making them (like their future offspring) behave in ways they should not. Explaining that he has made a śāstraic determination, Ṛcīka explains: "Since this *śloka* has already been proclaimed by the śāstraic experts: 'Whatever kinds of longings that women who are with child have, their son will be born with that type of character'" (*SkandaP* 6.166.37-38). Kolhatkar, on the other hand, states jokingly that he discovered the *caru*-switch "through his inner *sonography" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000). He then uses this moment of

anachronism to comment on the then-contemporary ethical debate surrounding genetic cloning:

> You can't take a pumpkin here and something there and do *cloning and produce an animal which has three eyes here, and five legs there, and we don't even know *what* will happen next. You should not create like this—it is dangerous and can cause world destruction. I remind you that even *scientists say this about *cloning. We should let creation be the way it is. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000)

Kolhatkar's juxtaposition of *tejas*-filled *carus* with genetic cloning was a digression that was almost entirely extemporaneous, and a typical feature of his month-long performance. Aside from *padas* (poems) copied diligently that afternoon by his wife—the Marathi *sākīs*, *diṇḍīs*, and o*vīs*, the Sanskrit *ślokas*, *vasanta-tilakas*, and *śārdūla-vikrīḍitas* that he would use to frame his storytelling—he did not bring written notes. And although he may indeed have deliberated on this subject before presenting it in his performance, the precise wording of his asides, unlike many younger *kīrtankārs* who memorize entire *pūrvaraṅgas* and *uttararaṅgas*, was always unplanned. The 'accidental aside' is a technique not unique to this particular *kīrtankār*, and the juxtaposition of a traditional worldview with issues and events of the modern world is a strategy that is typical to *kīrtan* and other genres of contemporary traditional storytelling. This is ordinarily done for understanding the ancient purāṇic story using a more readily graspable, contemporary framework—or as Kolhatkar put it, "how we tie together a *shirt with some strings" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). Though the urge to modernize the narrative does on occasion appear in his *kīrtans*, Kolhatkar-*buwā* generally seemed more interested in the reverse: using the purāṇic discourse of *sṛṣṭi* ('creation') to make sense of the scientific debate about genetic cloning for his audience, who are curious and

interested followers of such international issues, and who devour the news they receive on television and in newspapers, but for whom the essence of such concepts is often inaccessible. In other words, Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* produced a viable discourse on modern issues based on the authority of the *purāṇas*.

If we ordinary humans should not tamper with *sṛṣṭi*, then who may do so? The major and rather puzzling deviation in Kolhatkar's Satyavatī legend is the replacement of Ṛcīka by his grandfather Bhṛgu as the manufacturer of the *caru*. Also, it is he who discovers the *caru*-switch and it is he who defers the results for one generation. Not occurring in any epic or purāṇic version of the Satyavatī legend, I had a difficult time understanding why Kolhatkar might intentionally have given Bhṛgu this cameo appearance, and it appears that it is simply a variant telling of the legend. However, Bhṛgu's appearance seemed to serve two important functions. First, it presents a powerful motivation for the intentionality theme—the deliberate nature of Satyavatī's mother's *caru*-switch. Reasoning that "because of Bhṛgu's age, he's made a mistake" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000), her mother urges Satyavatī to switch the *carus* and the trees they are to embrace, since otherwise, "my son-in-law would get a 'special' son and me, old woman, would get some bitter son." Kolhatkar's Ṛcīka was young, and, as the *buwā* loved to point out time and time again, the audience of Nārad Mandir was elderly, retired, and ought to be taking *vanvās* (the third 'stage of life' of dwelling in the forest) instead of meddling in their children's lives. Kolhatkar's inclusion of the elder Bhārgava statesman thus iconized his audience. In other words, Bhṛgu appeared because the audience related better to him, and not to Ṛcīka. At the same time, since Satyavatī is torn between the domestic authority of her mother and of her husband, the addition of grandfather Bhṛgu

served to obviate the question of Kṣatriya agency. Bhṛgu is the eldermost patriarch of the Bhārgava family, and his status is therefore domestically unquestionable. As a result, Satyavatī's intentional *caru*-switch (or rather, her mother's directive to do so) becomes an act of insubordination rather than resistance to *varṇa* hierarchy.

As we might expect with any contemporary telling of an ancient legend, Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* performance of the Satyavatī legend involved an interpretive ambivalence. He told a Viśvāmitra-centered version, to be sure, but his performance came from a contemporary and Brahman point of view. In other words, a tension appeared during the performance between the narrative's Kṣatriya focalization—what the 'lens' of the legend itself brought into focus—and the *kīrtankār's* Brahman voice, the 'window' through which the teller allowed us to see the storyworld. Why did this take place? Perhaps overextending the metaphor, the purāṇic 'lens' is old, while the *kīrtan* 'windows' are new. While the Brahmans Ṛcīka and Bhṛgu represent a traditional and idealized way of life, the Kṣatriya sentiments of Gādhi, Satyavatī and her mother, are hyperbolized in the *kīrtan* to include the modern indulgences—cinema, cricket, 'Kaun Banega Crorepati'—that preoccupy many Puneri Brahmans, as well as modern scientific urges such as cloning that seek to change the course of nature. As Kolhatkar explained to me while reading a draft of this chapter, his contemporizations are not meant to update the story nor to condemn these new cultures, but to allow the audience to appreciate the distance between old Brahman ways of life and what surrounds their everyday lives (Kolhatkar, conversation, December 26, 2003). In other words, he is urging his audience to appreciate the antiquity of the lens.

While Sanskrit texts only implicitly reveal this interaction between old stories and new interpretations at the moments in which they differ, the structure of *kīrtan* makes this a much more conscious process, since religious, social, and political commentary, that is, the *kīrtankār's* preaching, must be presented first in the *pūrvaraṅga* before he tells the primary narrative. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the defining characteristic of *nāradīya kīrtan* is the linked structure of *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga*, distinguishing the *nāradīya kīrtankār* from the *vārkarī,* who tells only a *pūrvaraṅga*, and the *paurāṇik*, who tells only purāṇic legends (that is, an *uttararaṅga*).[62] The important role of the *nāradīya kīrtankār*, and particularly for text-centered ones, is to negotiate between the *bhakti*-centrism of (*vārkarī*) *kīrtan* and the *dharma*-centrism of the *purāṇas*—that is, to connect *bhakti* to *dharma*. These make up two distinct traditional worldviews, with *bhakti* discourse advocating a liberation from worldly activity (*mokṣa* from *saṁsār*), while dharmic discourse functions as a social structuralism that is "useful for running the world" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 2, 2000). Viewed in another way, *kīrtan* becomes for the *nāradīya kīrtankār* a debate about religion and society. To enter this debate, and state his case, Kolhatkar-*buwā* used the Satyavatī legend's mapping of *varṇa* onto domestic spaces as a homology for drawing the contemporary boundaries between *bhakti*-centered and *dharma*-centered ways of life.

[62] Yashwant Pathak points out that "it is a tradition from long ago that in the two primary genres of *kīrtan* known as *nāradīya* and *rāmdāsī*, that an *ākhyān* must decorate the *nirūpaṇ* [discourse] of the *pūrvaraṅga*. Govinda Tarakashram is thought to have been started this tradition. His time period is the eighteenth century" (Pathak 1980, 166). To the *paurāṇik*, we may also add the *vaiyāsik kīrtankār*, mentioned in the early twentieth-century Sanskrit manual of *kīrtan*, the *Kīrtanācāryakam* of Vishnushastri Bhagavat, and kindly pointed out to me by V. L. Manjul, ex-Librarian of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, as a tradition that was alive in his family in Pandharpur until quite recently (Manjul, personal communication, January 7, 2004).

He carried this out in his *pūrvaraṅga* by mapping the opposition of *dharma* and *bhakti* onto two sets of more easily graspable semantic pairs: the *ṛṣi* and the *sant*, and *ṛta* and *satya*. He began his Satyavatī *pūrvaraṅga* by discussing the semantics of the word *ṛṣi* in contemporary Pune:

> We use the word *ṛṣi* for whatever. *Vijñān maharṣi* ['science' *maharṣi*], somebody or other, or *bhājīpālā maharṣi* ['leafy vegetable' *maharṣi*], somebody or other, isn't it? Or then, if someone is very adept at building and so on, then he is a *maharṣi* in the field of *construction. And then there is of course our "*Maharṣi* Karve Road." It's very famous, that road on which we live. "Maharṣi Karve Road." And then there are *śetī maharṣis* ['farmer' *maharṣis*]—these days, we notice many different types of *maharṣis* in this world. There are many kinds of *maharṣis*. Many different sorts. And in general, the origin of these *maharṣis*…if we take a close look, it seems that this word began to be used again in the twentieth century. Before that, this word had ceased [to be used] five thousand years ago. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

He the expanded this contrast between the ancient meaning of *ṛṣi* and the term that he feels to have taken its place in Marathi: the *sant*. First giving a list of *ṛṣis*—Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, and other Vedic *ṛṣis*, Kolhatkar explained:

> In the Vedas, there are thousands of *ṛṣis*. But this is such an ancient ancient ancient ancient history, but in the intermediary two thousand years—who were *ṛṣis* during Shivājī's time? It's not that Shivājī regarded them as *ṛṣis*. It's not so. Rāmdās is not regarded as a *ṛṣi*. Not a *ṛṣi*, he's a *sant*. Eknāth? He's not a *ṛṣi*, he's a *sant*. Tukārām? He's not a *ṛṣi*, he's a *sant*. Jñāneśvar? He's not a *ṛṣi*, he's a *sant*. Nivṛttināth? He's not a *ṛṣi*, Savitā-Māḷī, not a *ṛṣi*, Chokhobā, not a *ṛṣi*. These are all *sants*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

Kolhatkar's repetitive and musical name-dropping of saintly figures served to create a clear historical contrast between the ancient purāṇic time frame of Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, and Vāmadeva, and the relatively modern historical time frame of Shivājī and the Vārkarī *sants*—a time frame that is of central concern to the audience of *kīrtan*. The term *ṛṣi*, he noted, has lost semantic value in today's Marathi usage of vegetable-*maharṣis* and

construction-*maharṣi*, while the term *sant* has largely retained its *bhakti*-centered meanings.

In trying to recuperate an authentic meaning of *ṛṣi*, Kolhatkar posited the fundamental difference between *ṛṣi* and *sant* to lie in their relationships to the Vedas:

> There are many resemblances between the two, but many different things as well. There is similarity, but also there is difference. The similarity that is there is in their *tattvadarśan* [philosophical vision]. In terms of *tattvadarśan*, they are both equal. But in terms of *sāmarthya* [individual power], there is great difference between *ṛṣi* and *sant*. In terms of *sāmarthya*, there is great difference between *ṛṣi* and *sant*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)[63]

The difference between the mythological *ṛṣis* and the historical *sants*, therefore, is not in their particular religious messages, ultimately based in the Vedas, but in their *sāmarthya*—the effective power that they receive from their relationship to the Vedas. This movement from icon (*ṛṣi* and *sant*) to power (*sāmarthya*) becomes the first link in Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s chain of arguments, parallel to the legend's reduction of the counter-normativity of Viśvāmitra and Paraśurāma to the *tejas* infused in the two *carus*.

This *sāmarthya* is demonstrated through what they do, and Kolhatkar next clarified the distinction between the behavior of *sants* and the *ṛṣis*. While the *ṛṣis* produced the Vedas, the *sants*' internalized Vedic knowledge surfaces through their conduct, and Kolhatkar gave an example from the life of the seventeenth-century *sant* Tukārām:

> Though a prostitute came to Tukārām, he only saw her as his mother. That ended the issue. "Oh, Māulī, how come you have come here"—that's how he greeted her. How was his conduct? There was no reason for him to say like, "Why did

[63] Again, the repetition in his speech is a performative act—a way of highlighting his point and eliminating doubt. While the first utterance of "In terms of *sāmarthya* there is a great difference between *ṛṣi* and *sant*" comes naturally in the *buwā's* extemporaneous discourse, the second one, uttered more slowly and in a grand tone, is intentional, and acts almost reflexively, as a way that his oral discourse tries to make itself fixed for his audience.

> you come when I have a wife?" That issue does not even arise here. Because his veins are filled with *dharma*. That's how *sants* are. Their veins are filled with *dharma*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

Due to being filled with *dharma*, the *sants*' behavior indexes their internal power—a power that is in fact an internalized Vedic knowledge:

> They don't need to learn anything else. And that's why they say, "We know the meaning of the Veda. And I don't have to go to class for this. I don't have to pay the *fee for the *class."...The meaning of the Veda comes to them from inside. Knowledge comes from inside. The Veda should come automatically. It comes from inside. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

This mapping of philosophical interiority functions the same way for the *pūrvaraṅga* discourse as domesticity does for the *uttararaṅga* narrative—to map ideas onto spaces—and the next chapter will show that the movement from outside to inside (and from inside to outside) of Viśvāmitra becomes a way to talk about metaphysical movements as well. Kolhatkar's repeated use of *antaḥkaraṇ* (inner senses) as the word for what might be thought of as "soul," suggests that he has drawn a boundary between the outer, societal world, governed by *dharma*, and the inner, religious world, governed by what to most appears to be *bhakti*, but what is in essence the Veda.

Here, Kolhatkar's complex mapping of Vedic literature reveals a certain amount of his personal identity politics, and one of the more important reasons for why he performs *kīrtan*. One of the crucial concerns for the contemporary Puneri Brahman community that makes up a large portion of his audience, and indeed a significant population in Pune, has been the complex relationship between Brahman identity and the Vedas. Though they hold the Vedas in high regard, few Brahmans today learn them. More than any others, the Vedas are texts that are respected for their religious value, that have a tangible impact on the way the Brahman community works and are essential to the

political construction of Brahman identity. Ironically, these are texts that are inaccessible to nearly every ordinary Puneri Brahman, even more so than the *śāstras*, and it is in the space of *kīrtan* that the Vedas, like the *śāstras*, are given a folk representation so that the ordinary Brahman and non-Brahman may understand them. For Kolhatkar, since he had spent his youth learning the Vedas at a traditional and well-respected *pāṭhaśāḷā* in Pune and more recently since his son Samihan has become a *ghanapāṭhī* and actively participates in Vedic sacrifices, this task of translation has become of paramount importance.[64]

In order to explain the interiorized nature of Vedic knowledge to his Nārad Mandir listeners, Kolhatkar took recourse to anecdotes that again mapped abstractions onto tangible, realworld examples. Kolhatkar-*buwā* domesticized the mysteries of Vedic culture, making an otherwise highly esoteric concept more accessible. Through a joke about his accompanist Joglekar-*buwā*'s innate abilities to make animal noises he playfully demonstrated how "the Veda should come automatically…from inside" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000).[65] The same way that the knowledge of crow

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[64] Ved Bhavan, once remotely situated on Paud Road on the outskirts of Pune has now become engulfed by the hustle and bustle of Chandani Chowk, and its placid and austere environment may serve as a local, real-life parallel of the space invoked in Kolhatkar's descriptions of Vasiṣṭha's hermitage.

[65] This digression is worth quoting in detail, if simply to gain a sense of the humor and extemporaneity of a *kīrtan* performance:

> I might have told you before, that he knows how to make crow sounds well. Now, once some *sāheb's* mother had passed away, but the crow wouldn't touch the *oṭhaḍī* ['the lips']. The mother passed away, and the crow wouldn't touch the *piṇḍa* [a ball of rice to be given to the ancestors during the funeral]. Now what to do? They waited for a long time, two and a half hours, three hours, I'm telling this right in front of him, you see, so if he had spoken falsely, then let [the blame] fall on him, you see. [Laughs] I'm telling the story he told, and then what I saw firsthand. Finally, his friend came, but Joglekar was sleeping, maybe taking an afternoon nap. They took him there in a car. And then, at the place where they had kept that *piṇḍa*, Joglekar went near the *piṇḍa*, and made the sound of a crow, and then all at once crows assembled there. [Laughter].
>
> When he told this story, we were in Goa. We were at one of my maternal cousins. When he told this story there, my little nephews said, "Show us how you do it, right here." He said, not the first *part, I'll show you the second *part." [Laughter] I don't want the situation for a crow not to

sounds exists innately within the harmonium player, so too does Vedic knowledge exist within the *sants*. Furthermore, the outside world of ordinary humans has access to this knowledge only through the mediating voices of the *peṭī*-player and the *sant*.

At the same time, Kolhatkar was careful to maintain a distinction between the *sants*' relationship to the Vedas and that of the *ṛṣis*. What exactly did the *sants* internalize? It was not the texts of the Veda themselves, but the abstract notion of Vedic *knowledge*: "It's not the case that learning the meaning of the Vedas requires learning the Vedas," he claimed (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). Again, for his audience, Kolhatkar provided another everyday, domestic example of what this meaning is:

> You should wash your hands after eating—this is told in the Vedas, so is it that you need to learn the Vedas in order to know this? You should wash your hands after eating—this is told in the Vedas. So do you have to learn the Vedas for this? No. In our childhood our mothers had laid one on us right across the face, and just one of these is enough. [Laughter]. We don't have to learn any *mantras* for this. This day-to-day life of ours is a part of our Vedic *saṁskṛti* [culture], and our parents have taught us many Vedas. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)[66]

The *sants* have command of this everyday Vedic knowledge that we all, to a greater or lesser degree, possess. *Ṛṣis*, on the other hand, do not express an internalized Vedic knowledge, but the Vedas themselves. As a result, they assume a relationship of power with the cosmos and with creation (*sṛṣṭi*) that *sants* do not.

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touch [the *piṇḍa*], but I'll collect some crows for you. We went into the courtyard, Joglekar made a sound, and immediately crows were present. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

[66] Notice again the *kīrtankār's* technique of repetition—the first statement was extemporized, but then, after a slight pause, he repeated it. Here, not only did repetition serve to emphasize his point—that the Veda teaches things that we learn through ordinary domestic life—but also became a performative act. It is counterintuitive that the audience has Vedic knowledge, for the Vedas are generally imagined to be the most esoteric Hindu literature, accessible only after years of rigorous study. Most of his audience members would therefore deny that they had Vedic knowledge. However, when he repeated this statement the second time, after the pause, it was with a *vaidika* voice, the voice of someone speaking on behalf of Vedic culture, and whose expertise the audience could not dispute. The words were precisely the same, but the revelatory tone of his statement, the gravity of the pause, and the confidence of the second utterance was an attempt to 'bring into being' what he was saying.

Kolhatkar's complex argument rests on determining the relationship of *ṛṣi* and *sant* to two different Sanskrit words meaning "truth": *ṛta* and *satya*. *Ṛta* may roughly be thought of as cosmic or universal order, while *satya* is individual, truthful behavior.[67] Linking *ṛṣis* etymologically to *ṛta*, Kolhatkar used this binary to make a distinction between *ṛṣis* and *sants*:

> Now, '*ṛtam*' means the knowledge of the cosmos. *ṛta* and *satya*—these are brothers…and this is precisely the difference between *sant* literature and *ṛṣi* literature. *Sant* literature does not provide a mapping out [*kholṇe*—literally, 'digging out'] of the *trailokya* [the cosmos]. The *sants* don't map out the *trailokya*. *Ṛṣis* are explaining how to map out the *trailokya*…This is the difference between *ṛṣis* and *sants*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

This difference, arising from their fundamentally different relationships to the Veda, gives *ṛṣis* and *sants* unequal levels of *sāmarthya*.

To explain this in modern terms, Kolhatkar provided an analogy from the history of physics:

> So it is that the science [*vijñān*] of this cosmos can be carried out through the teachings of the *ṛṣis*. It is not impossible—we may understand a great deal of it. Eventually, of course we have to do our own *tapaścaryā*, because in order to understand science, we have to do our own *tapas*. There is no doubt about this. Though you may have read Newton, it hardly means you can do what Newton did. It's not at all like this. Just because you've read Gauss, does it mean you can do what Gauss did? Just because you've read Faraday, it hardly means you can do what Faraday did. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

Like his anachronisms, Kolhatkar's physics parallelisms created a homology—as a projection of the concept of the *ṛṣi* onto the modern notion of the path-breaking physicist. It was an image with personal resonances, since Kolhatkar runs high school physics laboratory courses out of his home, and pictures of these scientists hang prominently in

[67] There is a linguistic relationship between the term '*satya*' and the proper name Satyavatī, which means simply 'she who has *satya*.' As we will see, there is a distinct connection between *satya* and the Kṣatriyas in the Viśvāmitra legends, for the original name of Triśaṅku, before he is cursed out of Kṣatriyahood, is 'Satyavrata' – 'he who is dedicated to *satya*.' Also, it is *satya* for which king Hariścandra will be praised.

the upstairs labs. Besides, critiquing Western science is something he truly enjoys. But the main purpose of his analogy was to bring his representation of the *ṛṣi* into correspondence with a contemporary set of indices—the esteem held for Western science is equivalent to what ought to be held for the Veda, and the *ṛṣis* ought therefore to be parallel with pioneering Western scientists whose work we may follow but whose 'Work' is impossible to replicate. Instead, like the *sants*, we may only follow in their footsteps and internalize their Vedic knowledge as *satya*. We will return to the division between *ṛta* and *satya* in Chapter Five, when these two concepts collide in the struggle between the *ṛṣi* Viśvāmitra and the truthful ('*satya*') Hariścandra.

IV. Conclusions

As it is in the *śāstras*, caste in the Satyavatī legend is predominantly about understanding the relationships between birth (*jāti*) and behavior (*varṇa*). The anthropologist Declan Quigley has remarked, "the history of the debate about the nature of caste can be viewed as the attempt to discover what exactly the correspondence between varṇa and jāti is" (Quigley 1993, 4), and this chapter has demonstrated that such a debate was decidedly as robust in ancient epic and purāṇic texts as it is in contemporary anthropological journals. Particularly if we are to value Sanskrit śāstraic texts like as the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* ('The *Dharma*-treatise of Manu') as articulative of an overarching, normative, and unchanging 'Brahmanic' structuralism, it is important to realize that even during the epic and purāṇic period there were significant alternative and *equally* Brahman-voiced configurations of social structure that were not necessarily 'Brahmanic.'

The first part of this chapter demonstrated that in the versions of the Satyavatī legend, a structural interdiscursivity was enacted through a mapping of *varṇa* onto the characters and domestic spaces of the legend's storyworld; during the textual performance of this mapping, focalization onto either Viśvāmitra or Paraśurāma resulted in contrasting visions of *varṇa*. In doing so, the Satyavatī narrative displaces the śāstraic question of birth and behavior onto a question of body and space. The spaces of the storyworld are structured by boundaries of domesticity—that is, the dynamic constructions of 'insides' and 'outsides' that I call a folk structuralism. And within these spaces, individual bodies like those of Viśvāmitra or Paraśurāma are able to cross boundaries of domesticity sealed for ordinary individuals. If purāṇic narratives may be considered textual performances, it becomes more and more apparent that points of textual divergence, which all too often become relegated to the marginal apparatus of critical editions, constitute sites where the narrative plurality of the text invokes a discursive plurality of caste.

We then considered what happens to this plural text in the context of its performance in *kīrtan*—that is, we attempted to discover what it is about performance that generates pluralities. When Kolhatkar told the legend in his *uttararaṅga*, his folkloric techniques of domesticization, localization, and contemporization allowed the narrative to be projected into the immediate context of the Nārad Mandir *kīrtan* community and speak to modern Brahman identity, which was the larger theme of his *kīrtan*. Rather than simply a passive retelling of a 'dead' Sanskrit story, Vaman Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* was at once traditional, relevant, and very much alive. More exciting than these folkloric mechanics, perhaps, is the interpretive homology between the *uttararaṅga* and the

pūrvaraṅga of the *kīrtan*, which I argue takes place more generally during the phenomenon of performance. Kolhatkar's Viśvāmitra *kīrtans*, initially to my surprise and chagrin, were not about caste at all. Rather than using the *pūrvaraṅga's* exegetical format to resituate, quite artificially, ancient questions of *varṇa* into today's Maharashtrian sociopolitics, or even to explain the story plainly, the *kīrtankār* produced a sophisticated homology between the narrative projection of Brahman and Kṣatriya *varṇas* onto domestic spaces with his own discursive projection of *dharma* and *bhakti* onto literary spaces. Just as the legend has been embedded time and again within epic and purāṇic texts to define and recuperate the boundaries between Brahman and Kṣatriya *varṇas*, this contemporary telling was an attempt to reconfigure the boundaries between Sanskrit and Marathi religious literatures. In the next chapter, while examining Viśvāmitra's squabbles with the *ṛṣi* Vasiṣṭha over a cow, as Viśvāmitra physically crosses the boundary between *varṇas*, we will also witness the debates that arose in Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* as his interpretation also tried to cross the boundaries between *dharma* and *bhakti*, and between Sanskrit and Marathi.

CHAPTER THREE

MAGIC COWS, CANNIBALS, AND RIVERS OF BLOOD: CROSSING *VARṆA* BOUNDARIES IN VIŚVĀMITRA'S CONFLICT WITH VASIṢṬHA

This chapter turns to the central legend in the representation of Viśvāmitra as a counter-normative icon: his conflict with the normative sage Vasiṣṭha over ownership of the celestial wish-giving cow (*kāmadhenu*). Extending the theory of epic and purāṇic subnarratives as 'textual performances' that map *varṇa* onto storyworld domestic spaces, we now examine what happens when Viśvāmitra actually crosses these *varṇa*/domestic boundaries. In plotting his movements, the *kāmadhenu* legend becomes a site where first the two epics and then purāṇic sources engage in a dialogue about what *varṇa* is, what it means to be a Brahman and what it means to become a Brahman. Second, we notice that when the *kāmadhenu* legend raises its counter-normative questions, it is supplemented by other legends that attempt to answer (or nullify) them. Though the text of the *kāmadhenu* legend may indeed be plural, its embedding—that is, its textual performance—is a 'monologizing' discursive enterprise. In order to recover the dynamics of this process, we turn to its performance in contermporary Marathi *kīrtan*, where, as we shall see, Viśvāmitra's self-transformation of *varṇa* is homologized to movements of religiosity.

I. Viśvāmitra vs. Vasiṣṭha in the epics: Some trouble with kāmadhenus

In the *Bālakāṇḍa* of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa arrive in the court of King Janaka of Videha, his minister Śatānanda joyfully welcomes the

traveling brothers when he hears that his mother Ahalyā was freed from her husband's severe curse.[1] He then gives them a formal introduction to Viśvāmitra, who has guided them thus far from Ayodhyā:

> Welcome, best of men. It is very fortunate that you have arrived here, Rāghava, following behind this *maharṣi*, the invincible Viśvāmitra. Doing the unimaginable, and with unequalled splendor, the radiant Viśvāmitra has become a *brahmarṣi* through *tapas*—do you not know that his is the highest path? There is no one on this earth more fortunate than you, Rāma, since your guardian is Kuśika's son, a performer of great austerities. Listen now and I will tell you about this great Kauśika. Listen as I describe the nature of his power and what happened to him. (*Rām* 1. 50.13-16)

Clearly, Śatānanda shares Yudhiṣṭira's astonishment (*Mbh* 13.3) at the fact that a Kṣatriya has become a Brahman. However, unlike the Satyavatī legend (*Mbh* 13.4), the *Rāmāyaṇa* explicitly ascribes his transformation to his *tapas* (ascetic practice) rather than his birth. In the next fifteen chapters of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Śatānanda will tell the Viśvāmitra 'cycle' of legends precisely so that we, along with Rāma, may understand the sage 'by the nature of his power' (*yathābalam*).[2] The literary representations of this power—*bala*, *tejas*, *tapas*—are the focus of this chapter's analysis; I am particularly interested in the intertextual dialogue that results from variation among these representations. Though a number of studies have taken, alternatively, psychoanalytic (Goldman 1978), structural

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[1] For a lucid comparative study of the Ahalyā legend, see Ramanujan 1991a.

[2] Curiously enough, the Viśvāmitra narratives are omitted from most Sanskrit and vernacular Rāma stories, though they occupy a large portion of the *Bālakāṇḍa*. It is not that Viśvāmitra is entirely absent in these tellings, for it is still at Viśvāmitra's instigation that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa leave Ayodhyā and return with wives. Nor is it the case that all of the *Bālakāṇḍa* subnarratives are left out of other Rāma stories; often included are the well-known legends of Ahalyā, Sagara, and Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. But the Viśvāmitra cycle is notably absent. Why this elision? Or, perhaps more to the point, why does Valmīki include them so elaborately? Robert Goldman has suggested, and this seems plausible, that the inclusion hints at a 'Kauśikization' of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, analogous to V. S. Sukthankar's original hypothesis of a 'Bhṛguization' in the textual history of the *Mahābhārata* (Sukthankar 1936). The concept of 'Bhṛguization' has subsequently been subject to a great deal of 'rethinking' (Minkowski 1991, Hiltebeitel 1999a, Fitzgerald 2002). I do not wish to dwell on speculating about the *Rāmāyaṇa's* redactive history, but it is nonetheless a highly suggestive parallel, especially when we consider the uniquely Viśvāmitra-centered perspective of the *Rāmāyaṇa* versions in contrast with the *Mahābhārata*.

(Biardeau 1999, White 1992), or myth-historical (Hariyappa 1953, Kapadia 1971, Rahurkar 1964) approaches to the Viśvāmitra cycle, this chapter will situate the textual performances of the *kāmadhenu* legend within specific contexts of literary history. Such an approach begins with the hypothesis that in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Viśvāmitra is intentionally included as a literary homology to reinforce and amplify the themes of heroic resistance and human will that constitute the essence of Rāma's own impossible quest to defeat the demonic Rāvaṇa.

Śatānanda begins with an exposition of Viśvāmitra's royal lineage (*Rām* 1.50.17-19), and over the course of the next five *sargas*, (*Rām* 1.51-55), he tells of Viśvāmitra's fateful encounter with Vasiṣṭha that spurs his quest for Brahmanhood. Since a complete translation is readily available (Goldman 1984), here I offer a summary of this lengthy narrative:

Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, and the *kāmadhenu* (*Rām* 1.50.20-1.55)

> Once upon a time, Viśvāmitra, who had reigned as the king of the earth for many thousands of years, assembled his forces to march across the earth. Passing through all his lands, he eventually came upon Vasiṣṭha's hermitage, full of placid deer, *brahmarṣis* and *devarṣis*, and ascetics who subsisted only on water, or only on air, or who ate only dried leaves. (*Rām* 1.50.20-28)
>
> Vasiṣṭha welcomed the king, seated him, and served him fruits and roots, according to proper custom. They had a long and friendly chat—they asked about each other's welfare, and the two spent a great deal of time telling each other stories [*kṛtvobhau suciraṁ kālaṁ dharmiṣṭhau tāḥ kathāḥ śubhāḥ*] and grew to be friends. (*Rām* 1.51.1-11)
>
> Viśvāmitra was about to take his leave, when Vasiṣṭha generously offered a feast for the king and his army. Viśvāmitra, thinking that this would be impossible for the poor *ṛṣi*, replied, "Holy sir, I have been honored enough. Let me just bow to you and go, and please just regard me with a friendly eye [*maitreṇekṣasva cakṣuṣā*]." (*Rām* 1.51.12-17)

But the generous-minded Vasiṣṭha insisted, despite Viśvāmitra's protests, and eventually the king was forced to give in to his wishes. At once, Vasiṣṭha summoned his *kāmadhenu* Śabalā and ordered her to produce enough food to feed king and army. Śabalā then produced all types of food and drink—as much as everyone desired—and all became full and content. (*Rām* 1.51.18-1.52.6)

Filled with great delight, Viśvāmitra offered to buy the cow: "Give me Śabalā, in exchange for a hundred thousand cows. Indeed, she is a jewel [*ratna*], and the king owns all jewels. Therefore, twice-born, give me Śabalā, she is rightfully [*dharmataḥ*] mine."[3] Vasiṣṭha refused to sell her for any amount, saying, "She is as indispensable to me as good reputation is to a gentleman.[4] On her rests our daily oblations, our offerings, our sustenance." (*Rām* 1.52.7-15)

Viśvāmitra insisted, increasing his offer, but to no avail. Finally, he decided to take her by force. As she was dragged away by the king's men, she cried out to Vasiṣṭha, "Have I been forsaken by the good Vasiṣṭha?" Vasiṣṭha replied that he was powerless to stop the king, saying, "My strength is not equal to the king, especially today.[5] The king is a mighty Kṣatriya, a Lord over the Earth. Behold his entire army, complete with horses and chariots, full of elephants and banners, because of it, he is stronger than I." (*Rām* 1.52.16-1.53.12)

Śabalā informed him that she was full of his Brahmanic power, and asked his permission to unleash it. He then instructed her to produce an army to destroy Viśvāmitra's army. Śabalā then emitted hordes of foreign armies from her orifices, Pahlavas, Śakas, and Yavanas that destroyed Viśvāmitra's armies. Viśvāmitra then let loose his own weapons, subduing the invaders. Śabalā created more barbarians from every orifice of her body, Kāmbhojas, Pahlavas, Yavanas, Mlecchas, Hāritas, and Kirātas, who again vanquished Viśvāmitra's armies. Seeing their father's army defeated, the hundred sons of Viśvāmitra then

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[3] "*gavāṁ śatasahasreṇa dīyatāṁ śabalā mama* | *ratnaṁ hi bhagavann etad ratnahārī ca pārthivaḥ* | *tasmān me śabalāṁ dehi mamaiṣā dharmato dvija* ‖" (*Mbh* 1.52.9).
[4] "*śāśvatī śabalā mahyaṁ kīrtirātmavato yathā*"(*Mbh* 1.52.12cd).
[5] Here, the commentators interpret the meaning of 'today' (*adya*) differently. The *Tilaka* of Nāgeṣa Bhaṭṭa suggests, "Today he is particularly undefeatable, is to be supplied. Today, on a day in which he has come as a guest, in particular due to his being a guest, he is not to be killed, is the meaning. When he says, 'The King is strong,' he is saying that the king ought to win battles. On account of his being a Kṣatriya who is the ruler over the earth, it is made known that killing him would be tantamount to a great crime" (*Rām GPP* 1.54.11, p. 316).
The *Rāmāyaṇa-Śiromaṇi* of Śivasahāya interprets *adya* as meaning "during this time of conflict." According to Śivasahāya, Vasiṣṭha means to say, "even though I am strong, I am respectable, from a Brahman family, and today, in this moment of dispute, I am not equal to the king." Śivasahāya explains further: "On account of peacefulness being a quality particular to a Brahman family, it is inappropriate [for Vasiṣṭha] to fight. Thus, a king, who is characterized by passion towards his subjects, the ruler over the Earth, a Kṣatriya, is in this case, during a time of dispute, stronger" (*Rām GPP* 1.54.11, p. 316).

ferociously rushed at Vasiṣṭha, who, with a single syllable '*hum*,' incinerated them all.[6] (*Rām* 1.53.13-1.54.7)

Witnessing the death of his sons, Viśvāmitra grew sullen and dejected, like a bird with broken wings [*lūnapakṣa iva dvijaḥ*]. Relinquishing his kingdom to a remaining heir, he went to the Himālayas in order to propitiate Śiva. Through the power of his great *tapas*, Śiva became manifest before him and granted him a boon. Viśvāmitra asked for the complete Veda of the bow [*dhanurveda*]—and then returned, full of self-confidence,[7] convinced that Vasiṣṭha was as good as dead.[8] (*Rām* 1.54.8-20)

Arriving at Vasiṣṭha's hermitage, Viśvāmitra unleashed his weapons, which engulfed the ascetic grove in flames and caused its inhabitants to scatter in fear. Vasiṣṭha, however, held his ground, and in a great rage, raised his staff and proclaimed: "You have destroyed my hermitage which had prospered for such a long time—you are an evil-doer, you fool! And so now you shall cease to exist." He appeared like the smokeless fire of Time, holding up the staff of Death.[9] (*Rām* 1.54.21-28)

Viśvāmitra merely aimed his Āgneya-*astra* and replied, "Hold still." Vasiṣṭha then taunted the king, "What is your Kṣatriya-power compared to the great power of the Brahman? Behold my divine Brahman strength, you Kṣatriya-*bandhu*!"[10] As Viśvāmitra let loose weapon after weapon, they were all miraculously swallowed up by Vasiṣṭha's lone Brahman staff [*brahmadaṇḍa*]. When even the dreaded *brahmāstra* was thus subsumed, Vasiṣṭha began to glow, fierce and dreadful with tremendous power. Afraid of the deadly consequences to the world if he should release this power, the gods and other celestials appealed to

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[6] Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa glosses "with a single syllable" as indicating "the force of [Vasiṣṭha's] ascetic power". He then justifies Vasiṣṭha's violent kiling of the sons: "The idea is that even though they were Kṣatriyas, since it was not the case that they were lords over the Earth, their death there would only require a slight amount of atonement, and also he is under attack" (*Rām GPP* 1.55.6, p. 316).

[7] The commentators differ on how to interpret *darpapūrṇa* (full of self-confidence). Nāgeṣa Bhaṭṭa suggests "the pride that was innate since he was a Kṣatriya, became complete from obtaining the weapons" (*Rām GPP* 1.55.19, p. 319), and this seems to be based directly on Govindarāja's earlier reading, "Already having pride on account of his being a Kṣatriya, he became completely full of pride particularly upon receiving the weapons" (*Rām GPP* 1.55.19, p. 320). Śivasahāya, however, feels that "Being devoid of great pride due to the non-existence of reasons for producing great pride, because of the destruction of his sons and so on, the mighty *rājarṣi* Viśvāmitra then, that is to say, during the time of receiving the boon, received *astras* as well as weapons, and became completely full of pride" (*Rām GPP* 1.55.19, p. 320).

[8] "*hatameva tadā mene vasiṣṭhamṛṣisattamam*" (*Rām* 1.54.20cd).

[9] "*vidhūma iva kālāgnir yamadaṇḍam ivāparam*" (*Rām* 1.54.28cd). On Vasiṣṭha's curse, Goldman notes, "This is one of the very few brahmanical curses in the literature that prove false. Strangely, no mention is made of this in the text or in any commentaries that we have seen" (Goldman 1984, 374). It may be argued, however, that Vasiṣṭha's curse, "*tvaṁ na bhaviṣyasi* [You will cease to exist]" (*Rām* 1.54.27d), *does*, in a sense, prove true, since Viśvāmitra'sBrahmanization will turn him into a different person altogether.

[10] Govindarāja explains the term *kṣatrabandhu* (literally, associate Kṣatriya) as "lower than a Kṣatriya" (*Rām GPP* 1.56.3, p. 321).

Vasiṣṭha to exercise control, saying: "O Brahman, you have defeated the mighty Viśvāmitra, be satisfied, eminent sage, let the world be free from fear." (*Rām* 1.55.1-21)

Vasiṣṭha relented, and Viśvāmitra, humiliated, profoundly declared: "Damn this Kṣatriya power! The radiant power of the Brahman is true power. With merely one Brahman's staff, my entire arsenal has been vanquished. And so, having reflected on this matter with clear senses and mental faculties, I will undertake severe *tapas*, which alone may grant me Brahmanhood."[11] (*Rām* 1.55.21-24)

This oath led Viśvāmitra through a long series of adventures, until finally he managed to control his anger (*krodha*) and lust (*kāma*), and accumulated so much *tapas* that it threatened the stability of the cosmos.[12] As the world began to collapse, the god Brahmā was eventually forced to intervene, addressing Viśvāmitra as *brahmarṣi* and granting his wish of Brahmanhood. Viśvāmitra agreed to abandon his austerities on one condition: that Vasiṣṭha acknowledge Viśvāmitra as "the greatest knower of the Kṣatriya Veda, as well as the Brahman Veda" (*Rām* 1.64.15).[13] Vasiṣṭha, ambiguously, did so, and Viśvāmitra ended his world-threatening ascetic fury.[14] From that moment on, Viśvāmitra has "roamed over the earth engaged in *tapas*" (*Rām* 1.64.19ab).

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[11] The commentator Govindarāja provides a rather sectarian interpretation of this defeat: "The mention of the complete ruin of all of the weapons that were given by Paśupati, along with their secrets, demonstrates the non-superiority of Rudra" (*Rām GPP* 1.57.1, p. 324).
[12] His adventures form the stories of Triśaṅku (*Rām* 1.56-59), Śunaḥśepa (*Rām* 1.60-61), Menakā (*Rām* 1.62), and Rambhā (*Rām* 1.63), and a curious encounter with Indra disguised as an ascetic (*Rām GPP* 1.65.5-9), which does not appear in the critical edition; these narratives will be analyzed in subsequent chapters.
[13] "*kṣatravedavidāṁ śreṣṭho brahmavedavidām api*" (*Rām* 1.64.15ab).
[14] The commentators are unhappy with Vasiṣṭha's capitulation. At *Rām* 1.64.17 we find that Vasiṣṭha declares: "Of your *brahmarṣi*-hood, there is no doubt; everything will become successful for you" (*Rām* 1.64.17ab). The commentator Śivasahāya, however, takes this to be a statement coming from the gods, not Vasiṣṭha, in the moment after Viśvāmitra "gains [Vasiṣṭha's] friendship." It appears in fact that throughout the narrative, Śivasahāya is hesitant in allowing Vasiṣṭha to submit to Viśvāmitra, perhaps signaling that he makes a Vasiṣṭha-centered reading (like *Mbh* 1.165), or perhaps he is of the Vasiṣṭha *gotra* like Durga, the noted commentator to Yāska's Nirukta who refused to comment upon the word *loḍha* appearing in *RV* 3.53.21-24, citing a belief that these verses, imprecations by Viśvāmitra directed at Vasiṣṭha, were forbidden to be read by those of the Vasiṣṭha *gotra* (Rahurkar 1964, 23).

This particular legend appears four more times in the Sanskrit epics and *purāṇas*: twice in the *Mahābhārata* (1.164-165 and 9.39), in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (3.17) and the *Skanda Purāṇa* (6.167-168, 171). Taken together, these subnarratives constitute a 'web of intertextuality' surrounding a central structural issue: locating the boundaries of *varṇa*. Since the time of the early Indologists, it has been hypothesized that Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha are iconic of their respective *varṇas*—Kṣatriya and Brahman—and their conflict is a reflection of, or a recording of, real historical conflicts between these two societal groups.[15] However, for Madeleine Biardeau, understanding this narrative simply "as an echo of a historical conflict between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas, with the Kṣatriyas rising up against the superiority of the Brahmans" fails to do it justice. The significance of this legend, she suggests, is "above all, ideological" (Biardeau 1999, 2139, my translation), since it comes to represent the complete structural opposition between the two *varṇas* of which Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha are members.[16] Based as it is on the work of Georges Dumézil, Biardeau's structuralism relies on her rather bold claim that "the epic and purāṇic versions are numerous, and are largely divergent, however their message seems to be always the same" (Biardeau 1999, 2140).[17] She is right, to the extent that the paradigmatic structure of the five versions of the *kāmadhenu* legend appears by and large

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[15] For example, consider G. S. Ghurye's sociological perspective in his *Caste and Race in India*: "the feud between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha is symbolic of a struggle between the Kṣatriya class and the Brahmana class" (Ghurye 1932, 45). J. H. Hutton, in his *Caste in India*, takes a geneticist approach to this caste struggle: "the contest between Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra may symbolize the amalgamation of the two cultures, and Viśvāmitra's formal renunciation of Kṣatriya ways the final ascendancy of the pre-Aryan religion" (Hutton 1951, 155, quoted in Rahurkar 1964, 23, footnote 46).

[16] Specifically, Biardeau posits that the rivalry between these two "is an expression of a very particular equilibrium which orders the relations between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas" (Biardeau 1999, 2139). Furthermore, this equilibrium consists of the (Dumontian) "strict separation of sacerdotal and royal functions" (Biardeau 1999, 2140). See White 1991 for a careful discussion of the structural notion of 'ideology.'

[17] Goldman's content-centered approach also arrives at this conclusion: "Despite differences in size and detail, the versions are fundamentally the same" (Goldman 1978, 351).

to be identical. However, if we move our focus from structural variation to the process of embedding, we find a significant 'shifting' of the hermeneutic lens takes place in each textual performance. In other words, variation takes place on the level of context, not content.

As with the Satyavatī legend, there is a mapping of *varṇa* structure onto the physical spaces and characters of the *kāmadhenu* legend's storyworld. First, the *kāmadhenu* legend presents a rather overt opposition between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha: Viśvāmitra is the palace-dwelling, martial Kṣatriya, while Vasiṣṭha is the forest-dwelling, orthodox Brahman. Their power is indexed by their *tejas* (radiant energy, brilliance), and becomes further represented through a series of symbolic binaries. For example, Viśvāmitra's power is represented by his army, while Vasiṣṭha's is represented by his austerities, and these are denoted respectively by *bala* (force or army) and *tapas* or *tapobala* (ascetic force). Vasiṣṭha's Brahmanic force (*brahmabala*) is also embodied in his *kāmadhenu* Śabalā; this is made explicit in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as Śabalā declares:

> They say that a Kṣatriya has no real *bala*, and that the Brahman in fact has more *bala*. Brahman, this *brahmabala* is divine, and it is greater than that of the Kṣatriya. You have infinite *bala*, there is none more full of *bala* than you—Viśvāmitra may be valiant, but your *tejas* is unassailable. Give me the orders, for I am filled with that *brahmabala*, mighty one, and I will destroy that wicked man's pride along with his *bala*." (*Rām* 1.53.14-16)[18]

[18] "*na balaṁ kṣatriyasyāhur brāhmaṇo balavattaraḥ | brahman brahmabalaṁ divyaṁ kṣatrāt tu balavattaram || aprameyabalaṁ tubhyaṁ na tvayā balavattaraḥ | viśvāmitro mahāvīryas tejas tava durāsadam || niyuṅkṣva māṁ mahātejas tvadbrahmabalasambhṛtām | tasya darpaṁ balaṁ yat tan nāśayāmi durātmanaḥ ||*" (*Rām* 1.53.14-16).The epic here is clearly playing on the multiple meanings of the word *bala*—physical strength, coercive force, an army. Thus when Śabalā promises to destroy Viśvāmitra's pride (*darpa*) along with his *bala*, she means strength, force, and armies together.

The *kāmadhenu* and the army, then, represent the deeper social categories of *varṇa*.[19] Furthermore, the symbolic manifestations of Brahman *varṇa* (and, in particular, Vasiṣṭha's Brahman staff—*brahmadaṇḍa*) quite literally 'encompass' or engulf Viśvāmitra's Kṣatriya symbols in the course of the narrative.[20] David Gordon White, extending this premise, first identifies a "fundamental cleavage between the *brahmarṣi* and *rājarṣi*" (White 1992, 61)—'brahman-sage' and 'royal-sage.'[21] This literary opposition, he maintains, was a reflection of historical social conflict: "In a sense, this struggle between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha mirrors the social upheavals, following the

[19] Biardeau has discussed this symbolic connection between the Brahman and the *kāmadhenu*. The cow is equated with the sacerdotal power of the Brahman, as Georges Dumézil noted, due to the cow's connections with the Vedic sacrifice. Thus the cow is both symbolic of prosperity as well as the power of a Brahman (Biardeau 1999, 1190). Wendy Doniger has taken the sacred cow to be a post-Vedic reemphasis of an older, Vedic maternal symbol of "non-erotic, fertile energy" (O'Flaherty 1979, 15), in contrast to the erotic mare. Goldman, on the other hand, suggests that the *kāmadhenu* serves as a psychoanalytic displacement of the Oedipal mother (Goldman 1978). In this respect, perhaps it is intriguing to find here an overtly aggressive 'mother' towards her 'son,' calling to mind A. K. Ramanujan's reversed 'Indian Oedipus' (see Ramanujan 1999c). Rather than trying to mediate between these various analytic models, I find it much more intriguing here to consider the *kāmadhenu* as a symbol of domesticity, insofar as her body becomes the locus of the *varṇa*-based struggle that takes place between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha.

[20] The *Rāmāyaṇa* at 1.55.13 uses the verb *gras* (swallow or engulf) to describe what Vasiṣṭha's staff does to Viśvāmitra's weapons. Jerrod Whitaker has provided a comprehensive discussion of the interworkings between these weapons and the Brahman and Kṣatriya *tejas* that is infused within them (Whitaker 2000). Whitaker's work describes what he terms an "ancient Indian physics—the principles of *tejas*—which are believed to permeate all forms of life" (Whitaker 2000, 107), but leaves open the (Foucauldian) genealogy of this "physics." In other words, as he admits, he is unable to determine "whether practicing *tapas* increases *tejas*, but obviously one needs both to acquire and employ divine weapons successfully. The relationship between *tapas* and *tejas* is unclear, although neither one is given precedence" (Whitaker 2000, 110, note 64). It appears that that the *Rāmāyaṇa's* version of this legend is indeed told to grant *tapas* precedence, while in other tellings it is Viśvāmitra's rage that causes his *tejas*.

[21] The paradigmatic identification of Viśvāmitra as a *rājarṣi* is problematic. The *rājarṣi* is a well-defined social/religious category in ancient Indian literature, the most famous perhaps being Janaka (Macdonell and Keith 1995, vol. 1: 271-273, Dikshitar 1995, vol. 1: 622-623). These *rājarṣis* are clearly 'wise kings'—that is, individuals who have remained Kṣatriyas but who have come to possess a high degree of Vedic or śāstraic knowledge. Furthermore, in practically no Viśvāmitra legend have I encountered any specific references to Viśvāmitra being regarded as a *rājarṣi* after his *varṇa* change. In most cases he is referred to as either having gained Brahmanhood (*brahmatva* or *brāhmaṇya*) or having become a *brahmarṣi*. Indeed, the *Rāmāyaṇa* constructs a hierarchy of *ṛṣi*-hood that is quite distinct from *varṇa* hierarchy—Brahmā initially offers him the status of *rājarṣi* (*Rām* 1.56.5), but Viśvāmitra is dissatisfied with this title and keeps doing *tapas*, losing his Kṣatriyahood and becoming simply a *ṛṣi*. He then is offered the title of *maharṣi* (1.62.18), but this too is unsatisfactory, and persists in his *tapas* until Brahmā is forced to confer him the title of *brahmarṣi* (1.64.11). It is true, however, that within the *kāmadhenu* legend (1.50-55), Viśvāmitra is called '*rājarṣi*' on several occasions (1.51.21, 1.52.6, 1.52.14), but it is always by Vasiṣṭha in direct conversation, and is due to either as an honorific or perhaps verbal irony.

seventh century B.C., which occasioned the coopting, by princes, of priestly prerogatives in matters of sacred knowledge and ascetic practice" (White 1992, 64).[22] This religious history remains a topic for debate—to what extent does the legend 'mirror' history, or to what extent does its textual performance construct this history?

Through the paradigmatic oppositions of signifiers—Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, army and cow, *astras* and *daṇḍa*—the *kāmadhenu* legend maps *varṇa* onto storyworld, generating two opposing narrative spaces: the Brahmanic space of Vasiṣṭha's hermitage and the Kṣatriya space of Viśvāmitra's palace.[23] The *kāmadhenu* legend then involves volatile character movements in and out of these stable storyworld spaces, raising questions about normative social structure.[24] There are three such key moments in the story: first, when Viśvāmitra and his armies enter Vasiṣṭha's hermitage, second, when Viśvāmitra, defeated by the *kāmadhenu's* outsider-armies, reenters the hermitage armed with Śiva's divine *astras*, and finally when a defeated Viśvāmitra leaves the hermitage and Kṣatriyahood.

Viśvāmitra's initial movement into Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* takes place with great flourish, and six verses are spent detailing the physical characteristics of this Brahmanic space.[25] Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* "resembles Brahmā's heaven itself" (*Rām* 1.50.28), and is

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[22] Though he has provided a number of lucid analyses of Viśvāmitra (White 1986, White 1991, White 1992), White does not compare the five distinct Sanskrit versions of the *kāmadhenu* legend. In fact, White ignores the *Rāmāyaṇa* version in favor of one of its *Mahābhārata* versions (*Mbh* 1.164-165). This particular telling comes from the *Ādi Parvan* entitled "Vasiṣṭhopākhyāna," ("The Subnarrative of Vasiṣṭha"), indicating this version's highly Vasiṣṭha-centered focalization.

[23] The royal palace is left undescribed in most tellings of the *kāmadhenu* legend, but its absence, I will argue, is essential to the *kāmadhenu* story.

[24] This narratology follows White's suggestion that "in the mythology of the post-Vedic age, the forest becomes the stage upon which are played out the ambiguities and contradictions that we find in Manu" (White 1992, 60).

[25] The *Rāmāyaṇa* does not specify the purpose for his journey, stating only that "Once upon a time, that mighty [king] organized his forces, and, surrounded by his legions, he marched across the earth" (*Rām*

visited by a great variety of ascetic and divine beings engaged in austere activities. Viśvāmitra's palace, though not quite as elaborately described, is a Kṣatriya space where "great Viśvāmitra took great care of the earth, reigning as its king for many thousands of years" (*Rām* 1.50.20). The precise semantic boundaries between Kṣatriya and Brahmanic spaces are further articulated in the dialogue between king and sage: the *āśrama* is home to austerities, sacrifices, students, and nature, while the palace is the location of *rājavṛtta* (regal activity), armies, and the treasury. Furthermore, the narrative presents this opposition as a domestic equilibrium rather than a hierarchy of purity: Vasiṣṭha's welfare (*kuśala*) lies in the hermitage, while Viśvāmitra's lies in his palace, and neither is *a priori* dominant over the other.[26]

Viśvāmitra's discovery of the *kāmadhenu* ruins the equilibrium. Viśvāmitra articulates a Kṣatriya-centered legal argument against Vasiṣṭha's Brahmanic claims of ownership, suggesting that Śabalā in reality belongs to him because she is a *ratna* (a jewel), meaning the best of her kind.[27] Then the *kāmadhenu's mleccha* armies shake the political status quo, overwhelming the king's forces and killing his sons. The 'outsider' status of these geographic and ethnic groups who demolish Kṣatriya domesticity is

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1.50.21). White suggests that "this may be interpreted as a royal rite of conquest, or as a form of ritual exile" (White 1992, 84, note 26). The exteriority of Vasiṣṭha's hermitage from Viśvāmitra's point of view, is made explicit in the *Skanda Purāṇa*'s telling (*SkandaP* 6.167): defeated, Viśvāmitra must sneak back into his own palace under cover of twilight in order to avoid public humiliation at losing to a cow.

[26] And so when Viśvāmitra first crosses the threshold of Vasiṣṭha's Brahmanic domestic space, it is highly ritualized so that this dangerous entry may take place safely. The performance of ritual in the *kāmadhenu* legend serves as a cultural destructuring/restructuring process through which individuals are able to safely traverse social boundaries (see van Gennep 1960 and Turner 1977).

[27] Citing the *Amarakośa* lexicon, the commentator Govindarāja explains, "she is a *ratna* in the sense that she is the best of her class [*svajātiśreṣṭha*]" (*Rām GPP* 1.53.9, p. 312). Viśvāmitra uses the term *dharmataḥ* (due to *dharma*) to describe his rights to ownership, suggesting that he is making a śāstraic claim—the commentators Govindarāja and Nāgeṣa Bhaṭṭa gloss this word as *nyāyataḥ*, meaning according to 'rule' or 'law' (*Rām GPP* 1.53.9, p. 312).

significant.[28] John Brockington has noted the importance of their appearance in dating this layer of the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[29] and further adds that "their role here is to defend brahmanical values; somewhat similarly the *dharmaśāstras* classify them as 'degenerate *Kṣatriyas*' in recognition of their status as rulers" (Brockington 1998, 207), implying that the *kāmadhenu* narrative reflects an actual pseudo-Kṣatriya status of these foreigners at the time of its composition. Goldman, however, argues that "the epic literature is not precise in its use of any of these names and...the terms are often employed only to mean non-aryan tribals or barbarians" (Goldman 1984, 373), and this is corroborated by the remarkable fact that after they destroy Viśvāmitra's armies, in all but one version (*SkandaP* 6.167) the *mlecchas* simply tend to disappear—no mention is made of their subsequent fate. To a great extent, I believe, the historicity of these 'outsider armies' is equivalent to what Goldman suggests for the *rākṣasas* and monkeys in the rest of the *Rāmāyaṇa*: "Attempts at the ethnological identification of the *rākṣasas* and the *vānaras* and the geographical location of their strongholds are not only futile but wrongheaded. For, in seeking a historical basis for what is, in many respects, a kind of elaborate fairy tale, we are led away from a true understanding of the work" (Goldman 1984, 28). Rather

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[28] The *Rāmāyaṇa* reads: "And from her bellowing '*humbhā*' arose the Kāmbhojas, bright as the sun; from her udders came the Pahlavas (or Barbaras), weapons in hand; from her womb came the Yavanas, and from her anus emerged the Śakas; and from the follicles of her hair, the Mlecchas, Hāritas and Kirātas" (*Rām* 1.54.2-3).
The *Ādi Parvan* version adds to this list of foreign armies: "She created the Puṇḍras, Kirātas, and Drāmiḍas, the Siṁhalas and the Barbaras, as well as the Dāradas and the Mlecchas from the foam in her mouth" (*Mbh* 1.165.36). Four manuscripts further add: "The Cibākas, the Pulindas, the Cīnas, the Hūnas, and the Keralas" (*Mbh* 1.1770*).

[29] Regarding the issue of dating, Goldman argues, "The references to these various invaders here must be understood as late and therefore as having no real significance in the dating of the core of the *Bālakāṇḍa*" (Goldman 1984, 373). Admittedly, while the mention of Pahlavas and Yavanas in these two versions does provide a significant *terminus post quem* for the telling itself—approximately the second century B.C.E. (Goldman 1984)—these terms are *not* found in the clearly later purāṇic tellings, and so we cannot be confident about their historicity: were these groups politically relevant when they appear in the *Bālakāṇḍa*, or were they as fictional as *vānaras* and *rākṣasas*?

than the historical peoples represented by the names of the 'outsider armies,' I suggest, it is the idea they represent—exteriority—that is essential to the work of the narrative.

So what might be a 'true understanding' of the *kāmadhenu* legend? Rather than documentary evidence of a historical process of social integration of the Pahlavas, Śakas, and so forth, Śabalā's *mleccha* armies are significant precisely because they are *not* integrated: they are the 'other'—armies of wholly alien bodies who fight against and overwhelm Viśvāmitra's 'home team.'[30] Since they emerge from the *kāmadhenu* and due to Brahman power (*brahmatejas*), these outsider armies symbolically exteriorize Brahmanhood, placing it in the blurry but threatening background of the scene. What the *Bālakāṇḍa's* version has foregrounded instead—though it is ultimately defeated—is Viśvāmitra's Kṣatriya power.[31]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* represents Viśvāmitra's Kṣatriya nature through his vengeful decision to retaliate against Vasiṣṭha using more sophisticated weaponry. Uniquely in the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling, Viśvāmitra propitiates Śiva for the *dhanurveda* (the Veda of the bow), "together with its primary texts, ancillaries, *upaniṣads*, and secret teachings" (*Rām* 1.54.16cd).[32] This is arguably the narrative's climax. Śiva gives Viśvāmitra the *astras*

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[30] Scholarly research on the term '*mleccha*' includes the work of Aloka Parasher, who has provided a detailed survey and socio-historical analysis of the term until 600 CE. Parasher notes that "the most important phase…which brought about a distinct change in the development of ideas in regard to *mlecchas*, was the period between *c*. 200 BC to *c*. AD 200" (Parasher 1991, 32). During this time, in which conceivably the epic versions of the *kāmadhenu* legend were composed, and in which *mlecchas* are listed as one of a number of 'outsider' armies that are produced from the orifices of the magic cow, "there was far greater pressure on the social order, accompanied as it was by the domination of foreign rulers" (Parasher 1991, 32), which was resolved "by grudgingly conferring on the foreign rulers the status of 'fallen *Kṣatriyas*'"(Parasher 1991, 32).

[31] Vasiṣṭha eulogizes Viśvāmitra as "a mighty Kṣatriya, the lord over the Earth [*balī rājā kṣatriyaśca pṛthivyāḥ patir eva ca*]" (*Rām* 1.53.11cd).

[32] The complete verse reads: "*yadi tuṣṭo mahādeva dhanurvedo mamānagha* | *sāṅgopāṅgopaniṣadaḥ sarahasyaḥ pradīyatām* ||" (*Rām* 1.54.16). The *Rāmāyaṇa's* usage of Vedic terminology for the technicalities of the *dhanurveda* offers an intriguing articulation of Kṣatriya pedagogy through a Brahman

(divine weapons) that he later bestows as a donor figure upon Rāma to form a crucial Proppian 'function' in the larger plot of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[33] This all takes place through another storyworld movement, as Viśvāmitra abandons his throne in search of this *dhanurveda*: "He appointed one of his sons for the kingdom and told him, 'Rule the earth according to Kṣatriya *dharma*.' Then he entered the forest" (*Rām* 1.54.11).[34] White has argued that this movement makes Viśvāmitra an icon of *sannyāsa* (renunciation) as opposed to Vasiṣṭha's status as *vānapraṣṭhin* (forest dweller) (White 1992, 61). However, here the legend does not passively recount an *actual* passage into a new stage of life (*āśrama*), but rather uses the familiar trope of renunciation in order to emphasize the extraordinary nature of the *astras*. It is true that Viśvāmitra renounces his śāstraic obligations to rule the kingdom, but his movement out of worldly life and into the sacred realm enables him to acquire *astras* unattainable for ordinary Kṣatriyas; making then the Kṣatriya equivalent to the Brahman's *kāmadhenu*. As Viśvāmitra returns to earth armed

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voice, for later, during his moment of transformation into Brahmanhood, he asks for the "*Oṁ* and *Vaṣaṭ* syllables and the Vedas [*oṅkāro 'tha vaṣaṭkāro vedāś ca varayantu mām*]" (*Rām* 1.64.14cd), and to be recognized as the paramount knower of both Kṣatriya and Brahman Vedas [*kṣatravedavidāṁ śreṣṭho brahmavedavidām api*]" (*Rām* 1.64.15ab).

[33] Viśvāmitra's demand of Rāma's martial assistance, Rāma's leaving home, defeating Tāṭakā, and Viśvāmitra's gift of *astras* are actions that Vladimir Propp had abstracted as formal 'functions' of fairy tales (Aarne-Thompson tale types 300-749). In syntagmatic terms, this section of the *Bālakāṇḍa* may be described as the following sequence of functions (XI-XIV): B^2 (A call for help is given, with the resultant dispatch of the hero), ↑ (The hero leaves home), D^9 (A hostile creature engages the hero in combat), E^9 (The hero vanquishes his adversary), F^1 (The magical agent is directly transferred to the hero) (Propp 1968, 36-44). Indeed, Viśvāmitra's primary role as martial *guru* and provider of *astras* to Rāma (as well as marriage-counselor) seems to be what has kept him in later Sanskrit and regional literary versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where his legends are not told but his presence as a fiery and forest-dwelling *ṛṣi* remains. Goldman suggests that Rāma's "later encounter with the sage Agastya is the source for the much more elaborate episode of Viśvāmitra's gift of divine weapons to Rāma" (Goldman 1984, 41).

[34] The imagery of a king abdicating to perform *tapas* is of course an essential feature of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, e.g., Daśaratha's and Rama's fateful renunciations of his throne in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*. Renunciation as a royal 'early retirement' is found repeatedly in the Viśvāmitra cycle—consider, for example, Gadhi's renunciation of the throne for the forest at *Mbh* 9.39, or Triśaṅku's abdication (as well as his father's) for spiritual pursuits in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*; even Hariścandra's ascent to heaven (*MarkP*, *DBhP*) might be considered a premature escape.

to the teeth and "swelling with valor like the ocean during full moon" (*Rām* 1.54.20), the text produces a *vīra rasa* that resonates with Rāma's eventual assault on Rāvaṇa with these same weapons. At the same time, Viśvāmitra's re-entry into Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama*, in contrast with the earlier scene of peace and merriment, graphically depicts the violence of Kṣatriya penetration of Brahmanic space: after Viśvāmitra wreaks havoc on its inhabitants and environs (*Rām* 1.54.21-23) "great Vasiṣṭha's hermitage became empty; in a moment, it was as silent as a wasteland" (*Rām* 1.54.24).[35]

Unlike Rāma's eventual triumph in Laṅkā, Vasiṣṭha's *brahmatejobala* (might of Brahmanic *tejas*) bests Viśvāmitra's *kṣatriyabala* (Kṣatriya might), and the latter is forced to leave in defeat.[36] Viśvāmitra's movement out of Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* and in search of Brahmanhood is the legend's final traversal of boundaries. This narrative movement generates a discursive uncertainty—what is the nature of the force, *tapas*, that Viśvāmitra uses to gain Brahmanhood? To answer this, the *Bālakāṇḍa* supplements the *kāmadhenu* legend with other Viśvāmitra legends, forming a mini-epic. The *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling of the Viśvāmitra cycle is driven by a discourse of *tapas*: by mapping the categories of *varṇa* onto the domestic spaces of the *kāmadhenu* legend, the *Rāmāyaṇa* presents *tapas* as the counter-normative force centrally involved in the traversal of śāstraic barriers.

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[35] "*vasiṣṭhasyāśramapadaṁ śūnyam āsīn mahātmanaḥ | muhūrtam iva niḥśabdam āsīd īriṇasannibham* ||" (*Rām* 1.54.24). The use of the term 'wasteland' (*īriṇa*) signifies extreme exteriority: Vasiṣṭha's home is made uninhabitable. The fact that the hermitage is located in the forest (*āraṇya*) in the first place is a marker of its non-domesticity with respect to the Kṣatriya palace. Furthermore, as White notes, "an etymology suggested for the term *āraṇya* ('forest') is 'other', or 'foreign' (from *araṇa*)" (White 1992, 85).
[36] Viśvāmitra's crucial defeat has been interpreted alternatively as a projection of a negative resolution to the oedipal struggle (Goldman 1978), as a reinforcement of normative *varṇa*-based social structure (Biardeau 1999) or as a logical working-out of the ancient scientific system of *tejas* (Whitaker 2000). In any case, as White suggests, the point is that the narrative itself, like Viśvāmitra, is not satisfied with this turn of events.

Every other epic and purāṇic telling of this story involves a similar mapping of social categories onto domestic spaces, but offer different interpretations of what Viśvāmitra's boundary-crossings represent.[37] The *Śalya Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* offer versions of the *kāmadhenu* legend that, like the *Bālakāṇḍa's*, may rightfully be thought of as Viśvāmitra-centered—they focalize on Viśvāmitra as he moves in and out of *varṇa*/domestic spaces. When this story is centered on Vasiṣṭha, (i.e., in the *Mahābhārata's Ādi Parvan* or in the *Skanda Purāṇa*), it produces new implications of Viśvāmitra's now hostile, unwarranted, and frankly criminalized penetration of Brahmanhood. In this manner, different voices are articulated within the polyphony of the legend; however, it would be erroneous to ascribe them as emerging from distinct ancient Indian social groups, since they are processed through the Brahman filters of an epic and purāṇic text: in the end, each version is unquestionably Brahmanic. In other words, while the *kāmadhenu* legend as a dialogic text *provokes* a counter-normative discursive space within epic and purāṇic literature, its normatvizing 'textual performances' struggle to disallow such an eventuality.

On the surface, the *Rāmāyaṇa* tells this story in order to glorify Viśvāmitra in a type of *ṛṣi*-hagiography. But there is clearly more to it, since, as we have noted, this legend initializes a cycle of narratives powered by the *vīra* and *adbhuta rasas* of Viśvāmitra's *tapas* and fury. White reasons this 'passion' to be allegorical projection:

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[37] Here, the Indologist is obliged to confront the New Critical fallacy of authorial intention, that "the intention of the author is not thought to be what determines the meaning" (Culler 1997, 97). Greg Bailey has pointed out that the anonymity of the purāṇic author results in his collapse into context—into a 'Purāṇic tradition' (Bailey 1999). A consideration of intertextuality mediates against this eventuality. In this sense, rather than conducting a text-historical reconstruction of an *ur*-form of the legend that migrates through a multitude of historical contexts, I suggest that multiple texts ought to be read as a set of (louder and quieter) voices participating in the construction of historical context, as texts "bringing into being what they name" (Culler 1997, 96). In our case, what these texts name is the force which enables *varṇa* change.

> If nothing else, we may safely say that the language of all these narrativizations of food and purity codes and status anomaly is *passionate* language. Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha, and their minions are constantly furious, murderously furious, at one another...The passion of these narratives betrays the importance of the matters being allegorized in them. (White 1992, 80)

For White, and for most analysts, including myself, the underlying 'matters' are the structures of *varṇa*, and the 'passion' that engulfs the telling of this legend is precisely the force generated through the breakdown of social boundaries.

To speak of narrative force, argues the literary scholar Andrew Gibson, is to move away from geometric conceptualizations of a narrative and towards a postmodern narratology (Gibson 1996, 33); while he is thinking of more unconventional genres of contemporary English literature, I suggest that such an approach is useful also for the analysis of *upakathās* embedded in epic and purāṇic texts.[38] When this legend induces a rupture in the boundaries of *varṇa*, the resulting force is 'ungrammatical'—not immediately graspable from a preexisting set of cultural (that is, śāstraic) codes. In other words, the epic's audience understands the dominant status of the king in the royal court and the Brahman in the ascetic hermitage, but Viśvāmitra's royal sanction to take the *kāmadhenu* from Vasiṣṭha's hermitage is a śāstraic ambiguity—hence, the motif of Kṣatriyas invading Brahman spaces is a favorite of epic and purāṇic subnarratives. Similarly, at the end of the legend, when Viśvāmitra has forcibly entered the Brahman *varṇa*, we are also left with a puzzle: how, *really*, did he do it? This central

[38] Gibson employs the 'energetics' of Gianni Vattimo (Vattimo 1988), Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), and in particular Jean-François Lyotard's (Lyotard 1985) "irruption of figure into discourse" (Gibson 1996, 65) to contemplate narrative in terms of force—"to conceive of it as a constant folding into and unfolding out of form" (Gibson 1996, 66). Though its primary sources of analysis are in vastly different historical contexts, the 'radical hermeneutics' of postmodern narrative theory, and especially its concern with recovering the articulative power of narrative, allows us to locate voices within the epic that are questioning, anti-structural, and quite manifestly political.

ungrammaticality is what 'spills over' into the surrounding narrative frames, and constitutes the counter-normative force of the subnarrative. That is, the reason why this particular story is told, not just in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but in its other epic and purāṇic versions as well as the countless times it must have been told orally, is not to answer Yudhiṣṭira's question—"How can a Kṣatriya become a Brahman?"—but to *ask* it. Michael Riffaterre has suggested that such a poetics is delimited by its intertextuality—by 'hypograms' that control how a poem is to be read, and which allow the reader to decipher the text and solve its puzzle of meaning. Riffaterre's approach to late medieval French poetry provides a model of understanding the reception of a purāṇic text in which the *answer* to the question of Viśvāmitra's *varṇa* change is located in the intertext—in the spaces between this legend and the other narratives that surround it, as well as in the dialogue between its different versions. To these linkages we now turn.

The *kāmadhenu* in the *Ādi Parvan* (*Mbh* 1.164-165)

We find two influential versions of the Viśvāmitra-Vasiṣṭha legend in the *Mahābhārata*—the first in the *Ādi Parvan* (*Mbh* 1.164-165), which appears older than the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling, and a later version in the *Śalya Parvan* (*Mbh* 9.39).[39] There is clearly a close relationship between the *Ādi Parvan* and *Rāmāyaṇa* versions, and in particular, a borrowing: Viśvāmitra's famous *dictum* at *Rām* 1.55.23 is also found (in a variant form) at *Mbh* 1.165.42. Furthermore, this verse is not found in any of the three other versions—

[39] A minor Indological debate has arisen regarding the relative chronology of these versions with the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here, I follow Goldman, who feels that "the northern version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* knew the *Mahābhārata* episode" (Goldman 1984, 371)—i.e., the *Ādi Parvan* version.

though in certain later texts there are clear modifications of it.[40] The *Rāmāyaṇa* version reads:

> *dhigbalaṁ kṣatriyabalaṁ brahmatejobalaṁ balam |*
> *ekena brahmadaṇḍena sarvāstrāṇi hatāni me ‖*
>
> Damn this Kṣatriya force! The force of Brahman energy is truly the greater force. With merely one Brahman's staff, my entire arsenal has been vanquished. (*Rām* 1.55.23)

In the *Ādi Parvan*, we find:

> *dhigbalaṁ kṣatriyabalaṁ brahmatejobalaṁ balam |*
> *balābalaṁ viniścitya tapa eva paraṁ balam ‖*
>
> Damn this Kṣatriya force! The force of Brahman energy is truly the greater force. Ascertaining what is and is not true force [or, what is relatively more powerful], clearly, *tapas* is the highest force. (*Mbh* 1.165.42)

One immediate and ironic implication of this and other intertexts between these two legends is that they are related through conscious borrowing. The *verbatim* appearance of this half verse indicates that one was aware of the other, though presumably the *kāmadhenu* legend did exist orally before either of these epic renderings, and migrated through a process of monogenesis and diffusion before it appeared in epic form.[41] On the other hand, the two legends—and even the two verses—are divergent enough in their wording to suggest a more complex relationship than a completely inert

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[40] At the end of the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* version, we find the following verse: "Alas, sinful and suffering, he vehemently cursed the power of a Kṣatriya; having determined that Brahman power was more difficult to overpower, he engaged himself in *tapas*" (*DBhP* 3.17.23). In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, we have the following: "His eyes full of tears, he began to lament: 'Damn the power of Kṣatriyas! Damn this valor, damn this livelihood! The power of the Brahman is alone to be praised, the singular, radiant, Brahmanic power" (*SkandaP* 6.167.72).

[41] An argument for monogenesis and diffusion has been made, for example, in the relationships between the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, the "Ramopākhyāna" in the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Daśaratha Jātaka* (for a discussion of this scholarship, see Goldman 1984, 29-39), or the Śunaḥśepa legends (Roth 1846, Narahari 1941, Hariyappa 1953, White 1986).

copying.[42] Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the composer of the *Bālakāṇḍa*, if indeed he were trying to tell exactly the same *kāmadhenu* narrative as the *Ādi Parvan*, would not be able to reproduce word-for-word—orally or in writing—a single *Mahābhārata* chapter of 44 verses, or even, for that matter, to copy a complete verse. It seems clear that the *Rāmāyaṇa* version, if it is the later composition, seeks not simply to reproduce the narrative found in the *Mahābhārata*, but to *transform* it.

Instead of attempting to detangle this narrative's intricate textual history, we may therefore investigate the intertextuality—as a Kristevan *productivity*—between these two texts. The *Ādi Parvan's* telling, like the *Bālakāṇḍa's*, comes at a crucial point in the development of the epic—during the journey of the heroes to the *svayaṁvara* (marriage contest). During their first exile, as they are on their way to Drupada's kingdom, where they have heard that Draupadī's *svayaṁvara* will take place, the Pāṇḍavas are attacked (unsuccessfully) during the night by a Gandharva king, who explains that he had assaulted the party because: "You were without fire, without oblations, and without a Brahman to guide you" (*Mbh* 1.159.2).[43] The Gandharva then tells them the story of their ancestor, the king Saṁvaraṇa, who had received the assistance of the *ṛṣi* Vasiṣṭha in marrying the daughter of Sūrya, the sun, named Tapatī. Arjuna, "in whom had arisen great curiosity regarding the force of Vasiṣṭha's *tapas*" (*Mbh* 1.164.2cd), asks to know

[42] For example, within the *Ādi Parvan* version the wish-giving cow is named 'Nandinī' rather than 'Śabalā', the *kāmadhenu's* barbarian armies do not slay Viśvāmitra's hundred sons, Viśvāmitra does not go on a quest to acquire celestial weapons, and Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha do not engage in direct battle. However, lest we assume that the *Rāmāyaṇa* version merely embellishes an earlier *Ādi Parvan* text, or that the *Ādi Parvan* condenses the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we also find departures in the *Ādi Parvan*—most significant of which is the initial motif of the royal hunt. Compare the tellings of the *kāmadhenu* legend to the practically verbatim versions of the Satyavatī narrative, or those of the Satyavrata (Triśaṅku) legend that will be the focus of the next chapter.

[43] The Gandharva king is named Aṅgāraparṇa and Citraratha, but forsakes these names in defeat (*Mbh* 1.158.35-37).

more about the sage. In a dialogical parallel to Yudhiṣṭira's inquiry to Bhīṣma (*Mbh* 13.3), the Gandharva replies by giving an account of the exploits of this sage.[44]

> Lust and anger, which are always difficult to overcome—even for immortals - have both been conquered by his *tapas*, and these two now wash his feet.[45] [Vasiṣṭha,] noble-minded, did not destroy the Kauśikas, holding in his incredible rage at Viśvāmitra's transgressions.
>
> This lord, though powerful and burning from his attachment for his son, did not contemplate anything horrible to destroy Viśvāmitra, and who in not trying to bring back his dead sons from the house of Death, did not transgress Death, as the sea does not spill over the seashore. Self-controlled and mighty, the Ikśvāku kings of the earth did employ him, and so acquired this Earth.
>
> Indeed, descendant of Kuru, after appointing the eminent *ṛṣi* Vasiṣṭha as their foremost *purohita*, those kings performed sacrifices. He conducted sacrifices for all of those excellent kings, greatest Pāṇḍava, that *brahmarṣi* was to them what Bṛhaspati is to the gods.[46] (*Mbh* 1.164.5-11)

The Gandharva tells the legend in order to praise Vasiṣṭha as an archetype of Brahman orthodoxy, in an effort to convince the Pāṇḍavas why they are in need of a good *purohita*. In other words, the *Ādi Parvan's kāmadhenu* legend is told from quite the opposite perspective than the *Rāmāyaṇa*: rather than celebrating Viśvāmitra's achievements, it foregrounds the quality that makes Vasiṣṭha "the foremost *purohita*" of the Ikśvākus: his ability to overcome anger and desire—*krodha* and *kāma*—and the irresistible pull of vengeance. In transforming the earlier *Ādi Parvan* version, the

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[44] In some ways, Yudhiṣṭhira's query at *Mbh* 13.3, initiating the "Viśvāmitropākhyāna," may be read as a response to *Mbh* 1.164, which forms part of the "Vasiṣṭhopākhyāna." Yudhiṣṭhira alludes to the events of the *Ādi Parvan's* narratives (*Mbh* 13.3.3, 15), and Bhīṣma responds by legitimizing Viśvāmitra's birth through Satyavatī's *caru*-switch.

[45] Several manuscripts have added the following additional description of his self-control after *Mbh* 1.164.5, which the critical edition relegates to the apparatus: "Vasiṣṭha, the mind-born son of Brahmā, husband of Arundhati; he who curbs his senses, he is called 'Vasiṣṭha.' In the same way that he conquered both lust and anger, not conquered by men, he has also conquered his enemies, he has won worlds, and has earned celestial paths" (*Mbh* 1.1758*-1760*).

[46] A few manuscripts, relegated to the apparatus, here add: "And so, when accompanied by Vasiṣṭha, Saudāsa was engaged with *rākṣasas* dispatched by Viśvāmitra, due to the Brahman's assistance, neither mighty *gandharvas* nor *rākṣasas* were able to beseech him with their minds, hero" (*Mbh* 1.1751*).

Bālakāṇḍa refocalizes the legend in order to amplify the aesthetics of valor emerging from both Viśvāmitra's *tapas* and Rāma's conquest of Laṅkā.

The *Ādi Parvan's* focalization on the character of Vasiṣṭha and his extraordinary self-control instead of Viśvāmitra and his extraordinary *tapas*, results in a different portrayal of the *kāmadhenu's* production of *mleccha* armies. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* version, as we have seen, the *kāmadhenu* must remind Vasiṣṭha of his superior Brahman power; this sparks Vasiṣṭha's command to "Let loose an army to destroy my enemy's army" (*Rām* 1.53.17). In the *Ādi Parvan*, no such order is given. Instead, when Vasiṣṭha tells the suffering Nandinī, "The force of Kṣatriyas is power (*tejas*), while the strength of Brahmans is compassion (*kṣama*)—compassion has taken hold of me, and so you should go, if that pleases him" (*Mbh* 1.165.28),[47] Nandinī then independently releases her power and creates the *mleccha* armies.[48] Furthermore, as Hiltebeitel notes, Viśvāmitra's armies are crushed (*prabhagna*) but not slain in the *Ādi Parvan*, as "the superiority of Brahman forbearance (*kṣama*) is established over Kṣatriya strength (*bala*)" (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 459).[49]

This contrast explains the absence of Viśvāmitra's *astras* as well as Vasiṣṭha's *brahmadaṇḍa* in the *Ādi Parvan*.[50] If the *Rāmāyaṇa's kāmadhenu* legend involves a

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[47] "*kṣatriyāṇāṁ balaṁ tejo brāhmaṇānāṁ kṣamā balam | kṣamā māṁ bhajate tasmād gamyatāṁ yadi rocate* ||" (*Mbh* 1.165.28).

[48] Vasiṣṭha has earlier been lauded by the *gandharva* narrator for "holding in his incredible rage at Viśvāmitra's transgressions" (*Mbh* 1.164.6). The *Ādi Parvan* further eliminates the slaughter of Viśvāmitra's sons: "None of Viśvāmitra's soldiers was deprived of his life by the angered sons of Vasiṣṭha" (*Mbh* 1.165.39). Vasiṣṭha's self-control is praised through the subsequent narrative of Kalmāṣapāda (*Mbh* 1.166-167), where he suffers through the death of all one hundred of *his* sons without feeling vengeance (*Mbh* 1.168).

[49] "None of Viśvāmitra's soldiers was deprived of his life by the angered sons of Vasiṣṭha" (*Mbh* 1.165.39).

[50] According to Goldman, we may understand the apperance of the *astra* motif in the *Bālakāṇḍa* as kind of reduplication of the Agastya episode found in the older *Āraṇyakāṇḍa*, while Whitaker has noted that "Rāma obtains most of his divine arsenal from the divine sage Vasiṣṭha" (Whitaker 2000, 87).

social construction of *tapas*, Viśvāmitra's Himālayan journey substantializes this anger-charged *tapas* into the *astras*—much as we have seen the Satyavatī legend substantialize *varṇa* into Ṛcīka's *caru*. Viśvāmitra's *astras* nonetheless present a puzzle: if in fact the important residues of this legend are Viśvāmitra's *astras*, then why does his ownership disappear in the rest of the epic?[51] The philological ascription of the *Bālakāṇḍa* as a late supplement is actually helpful here. If, at the time of the *Bālakāṇḍa's* composition, it is already known that Rāma will defeat Rāvaṇa using *astras*, the *Bālakāṇḍa* transformatively links these *astras* to Viśvāmitra's *tapas*. The *tapas* and *astras* invoke the *vīra* and *adbhuta* sentiments. These *rasas* are aesthetically homologized to Viśvāmitra's emotions of rage, despair, and sheer heroic will, which are precisely the emotions that Rāma must experience (and in the case of rage and despair, overcome) in order heroically to defeat Rāvaṇa with the help of his *astras*. In other words the narrative produces an aesthetic homology for an epic audience already aware of the plot of the Vālmīki narrative.[52]

We are in a position to now ask how these subnarratives 'perform' a questioning of *varṇa* within the larger texts, and how this rupture is narratively sealed. Both epics come to terms with Viśvāmitra through supplementing the *kāmadhenu* legend with another legend; this interweaving of subnarratives is perhaps the most characteristic feature of epic building. While the *Bālakāṇḍa* weaves together a complex mini-epic of

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[51] Viśvāmitra's gift of *astras* is an overdetermination, since Agastya and Vasiṣṭha also give Rama *astras*, while Rama's actual battle with Ravana in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* does not mention that they once belonged to Viśvāmitra (Goldman, personal communication, January 2003).

[52] The reason why this aesthetic homology is carried out, why the *Rāmāyaṇa* chooses Viśvāmitra, is a question that will out of necessity be delayed until this dissertation's conclusion, but as foreshadowing, we may point to the legitimizing authority of Viśvāmitra as a Vedic seer. The extent Viśvāmitra's fame in the Vedic and post-Vedic periods is easily recognized from just a cursory glance at Vedic ancillary literature. See Sharma 1975 for a detailed study of all the known Vedic and post Vedic references to Viśvāmitra.

the counter-normative Viśvāmitra, the *Mahābhārata* creates a similar, though shorter mini-epic of Vasiṣṭha by supplementing the story of Kalmāṣapāda in the chapters that follow Viśvāmitra's attainment of Brahmanhood (*Mbh* 1.165.44). This legend may be summarized as follows:

The legend of Kalmāṣapāda (*Mbh* 1.166-168)

> Once there was an Ikśvāku king named Kalmāṣapāda, who set out from the city to hunt deer and boar in the forest. Traveling along a lonely path, he ran into Śakti, the son of the sage Vasiṣṭha. The king said, "Get off our path!"[53] but the *ṛṣi*, on the path of *dharma*, would not yield, and demanded the same from the king. Instead of moving out of the way, the king, in a rage, struck Śakti with his whip, who cursed the sage into cannibalism.[54] (*Mbh* 1.166.1-10)
>
> At this time, there had been a rivalry over patronage between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha. Viśvāmitra heard this happening and snuck up behind the two as they were arguing, and realized that this was the son of Vasiṣṭha. As the king fell to Śakti's feet in an effort to propitiate him, Viśvāmitra caused a *rākṣasa* named Kiṅkara to possess the king, and both he and Śakti left in fear of this *rākṣasa*. Though tortured by this *rākṣasa*, for a while Kalmāṣapāda was able to maintain himself. (*Mbh* 1.166.11-19)
>
> Meanwhile, a Brahman, seeing the king in the forest, begged him for a meal of meat.[55] Kalmāṣapāda told him to wait a moment while he returned to his palace, but as soon as he went home, the Brahman's request slipped his mind, and Kalmāṣapāda went to sleep in his inner chambers. At midnight, he woke up, remembering the Brahman, and summoned his cook, telling him, "Go, there is a Brahman waiting for me in the countryside, who wants food. Make him a meat dish."[56] (*Mbh* 1.166.20-25)
>
> But the cook could not find any meat, and fearfully returned to the king, who, possessed by the *rākṣasa*, offhandedly said to him, "Can't we feed him human meat?" The cook, overcoming his fear, quickly stole into the execution

[53] "*apagaccha patho 'smākam*" (*Mbh* 1.166.5a). Notice here the marked usage of the royal 'we.'

[54] "'Outcaste! Since you strike an ascetic like a *rākṣasa*, you will become a man-eater from now on. Addicted to human flesh, you will roam this earth. Begone, low king!' said Śakti of valorous might [*haṁsi rākṣasavad yasmād rājāpasada tāpasam| tasmāt tvam adyaprabhṛti puruṣādo bhaviṣyasi|| manuṣyapiśite saktaś cariṣyasi mahīm imām | gaccha rājādhamety uktaḥ śaktinā vīryaśaktinā ||*]" (*Mbh* 1.166.9-10).

[55] "*dadarśa taṁ dvijaḥ kaścid rājānaṁ prathitaṁ punaḥ | yayāce kṣudhitaś cainaṁ samāṁsāṁ bhojanaṁ tadā ||*" (*Mbh* 1.166.20).

[56] " Supply him with food mixed with meat [*annena samāṁsenopapādaya*]"(*Mbh* 1.166.25d).

chambers and snatched some human flesh, and prepared a proper dish, mixed with rice, which he took to the starving Brahman.[57] The Brahman, regarding the meal with a keen eye [*siddha-cakṣuṣā*], recognized it for what it was, and doubly cursed the king: "Since the king dares give me uneatable food, he will have the same desire—a craving for human flesh, as Śakti had cursed before!" (*Mbh* 1.166.26-32)

At this point, because of the double curse, and by Viśvāmitra's designs, the *rākṣasa* overwhelmed Kalmāṣapāda's consciousness. Not long after, he ran into Śakti, and, like a tiger eats his prey, ate him up. Then, directed by Viśvāmitra, he ate up the rest of Vasiṣṭha's one hundred sons. (*Mbh* 1.166.33-38)

Vasiṣṭha, full of despair at the loss of his sons, did not try to exact revenge upon his rival, but instead tried repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, to commit suicide. First, he tried to jump off Mount Meru, but as he fell, the rocks below became like piles of cotton. Then, he tried to jump into a fire, but the fire became cool and did not scorch him. He then tied a rock around his neck and jumped into the ocean, hoping to drown himself. This also proved futile, for the ocean's waves drove him back to shore unharmed. (*Mbh* 1.166.39-45)

He then tied himself up and jumped into a river, but the river's currents removed his fetters and carried him back to shore—he named this river the Vipāśā.[58] He jumped into another river, full of crocodiles [*caṇḍagrāha*] but it scattered off in a hundred directions, leaving him on solid ground—he called this one Śatadru.[59] Finally, convinced that "It is impossible to die!" he solemnly made his way back to his hermitage. (*Mbh* 1.167.1-10)

As he was walking to the entrance, he heard the sounds of Vedic chanting behind him. Turning around, he saw only his widowed daughter-in-law Adṛśyantī following behind him. He asked her, "Dear girl, who is making the sounds of complete Vedic recitation [*sāṅgasya vedasyādhyayanasvanaḥ*], that sound like Śakti?" She replied, "In my womb is growing the unborn child of Śakti, your son. For twelve months he has been studying the Vedas here, Sage." Vasiṣṭha became thrilled at this news of his progeny, and turned away from death. (*Mbh* 1.167.11-15)

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[57] "*tathety uktvā tataḥ sūdaḥ saṁsthānaṁ vadhya ghātinām | gatvā jahāra tvarito naramāṁsam apetabhīḥ || sa tat saṁskṛtya vidhivad annopahitam āśu vai | tasmai prādād brāhmaṇāya kṣudhitāya tapasvine ||*" (*Mbh* 1.166.28-29).

[58] "*tataḥ pāśais tadātmānaṁ gāḍhaṁ baddhvā mahāmuniḥ | tasyā jale mahānadyā nimamajja suduḥkhitaḥ || atha chittvā nadī pāśāṁs tasyāribalamardana | samasthaṁ tam ṛṣiṁ kṛtvā vipāśaṁ samavāsṛjat || uttatāra tataḥ pāśair vimuktaḥ sa mahānṛṣiḥ | vipāśeti ca nāmāsyā nadyāś cakre mahān ṛṣiḥ ||*" (*Mbh* 1.167.4-6).

[59] "*tataḥ sa punar eva ṛṣir nadīṁ haimavatīṁ tadā | caṇḍagrāhavatīṁ dṛṣṭvā tasyāḥ srotasy avāpatat || sā tam agnisamaṁ vipram anucintya saridvarā | śatadhā vidrutā yasmāc chatadrur iti viśrutā ||*" (*Mbh* 1.167.8-9)

Some time later, he and Adṛśyantī were walking in the forest, and ran into Kalmāṣapāda, who, still possessed by the *rākṣasa*, pounced to eat them. Adrsyanti became frightened, seeing the *rākṣasa*.[60] But Vasiṣṭha, recognizing him to be Kalmāṣapāda, uttered a *mantra* and freed him from his *rākṣasa* possession.[61] (*Mbh* 1.167.16-1.168.6)

The king, overwhelmed with gratitude, offered whatever Vasiṣṭha wanted, but Vasiṣṭha only said, "This has happened because of Fate. Go back to your kingdom and rule it—and do not ever disrespect Brahmans."[62] The grateful king then asked Vasiṣṭha for a favor: "Please go to my queen, who desires offspring, who is endowed with character, beauty, and virtue, for the sake of furthering the Ikśvāku lineage." Vasiṣṭha agreed, and the two returned to a celebrating Ayodhyā, where, at the appropriate time, Vasiṣṭha impregnated Kalmāṣapāda's queen,[63] who gave birth to the Ikśvāku Asmaka. (*Mbh* 1.168.7-25)

Though this narrative is found throughout epic and purāṇic literature, it is not always connected with Viśvāmitra, who here is represented as the architect of Kalmāṣapāda's transformation.[64] In fact Kalmāṣapāda's cannibalism is highly overdetermined—not only is it attributed to Viśvāmitra's devices, but also to not one but *two* curses from Brahmans. As a result, we may suppose that Viśvāmitra's appearance is intentional here, and is a response to the narrative it follows. Indeed, the Kalmāṣapāda

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[60] Like the *kāmadhenu*, she pleads to Vasiṣṭha for help: "Save me, Lord, from this evil, horrific form! That *rākṣasa* wishes to eat us right here! [*trāhi māṁ bhagavān pāpād asmād dāruṇadarśanāt* | *rakṣo attum iha hyāvāṁ nūnam etac cikīrṣati* ||]" (*Mbh* 1.167.21).

[61] "The very powerful *ṛṣi* Vasiṣṭha, seeing him about to pounce on them, blew him off with only one syllable "*hum*," Bhārata. Sprinkling him with water sanctified by magic formulae, he liberated the good king from that horrible *rākṣasa* [*tam āpatantaṁ samprekṣya vasiṣṭho bhagavān ṛṣiḥ* | *vārayāmāsa tejasvī huṅkareṇaiva bhārata* || *mantrapūtena ca punaḥ sa tam abhyukṣya vāriṇā* | *mokṣayāmāsa vai ghorād rākṣasād rājasattamam* ||]" (*Mbh* 1.168.3-4).

[62] "*brāhmaṇāṁś ca manuṣyendra māvamaṁsthāḥ kadā cana*" (*Mbh* 1.168.9).

[63] "The *maharṣi* Vasiṣṭha, the illustrious *ṛṣi*, spent the auspicious time [*ṛtu*] with her, performing by divine rite [*ṛtāv atha maharṣiḥ sa sambabhūva tayā saha* | *devyā divyena vidhinā vasiṣṭhaḥ śreṣṭhabhāgṛṣiḥ* ||]" (*Mbh* 1.168.22).

[64] As K. V. Sarma explains, the version in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* (64.1-3) proceeds as follows: "King Kalmāṣapāda was performing a sacrifice with Vasiṣṭha as the chief priest when a *rākṣasa* named Rudhira entered his body on account of a curse by Śakti. Later, urged by Viśvāmitra, who was a rival priest, Rudhira ate up Śakti and his brothers" (Sarma 1987, 70). Sharma points out that there are versions found in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Śiva*, the *Viṣṇu*, the *Bhāgavata* (*BhagP* 9.9.19-38), and the *Skanda* (*SkandaP* 3.3.2.17-79) *Purāṇas*, "but they do not relate to Viśvāmitra". He further mentions that in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.1.2.10-11: "the confrontation between sage Śakti and King Kalmāṣapāda took place in the Naimisa forest" (Sarma 1987, 70).

legend inverts the *kāmadhenu* legend by producing the same domestic maps and the same focus on food and violence, but by doing it from a perspective that disallows the possibility of counter-normative movement.

Like the *Ādi Parvan*'s *kāmadhenu* legend, this story presents a structural impasse. Kalmāṣapāda leaves his fortress to go hunting in the forest—the boundary between Brahman and Kṣatriya domestic spaces—and runs into a Brahman on the 'path of *dharma*.' Each refuses to budge, until the King literally 'lashes out' at the Brahman. This violent moment, parallel to Viśvāmitra's dragging away the *kāmadhenu*, is followed by an equally violent reversal of the śāstraic relation between Brahman and Kṣatriya: the frenzied, possessed Kṣatriya consumes the one hundred Brahman sons of Vasiṣṭha—a direct inversion of the death of Viśvāmitra's one hundred sons in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The feast motif also involves a reversal: the King must feed the Brahman, and, unlike Vasiṣṭha's vegetarian cuisine, meat is on the menu, and in fact the worst sort of meat: human flesh. Then there is the finale: through the common *Mahābhārata* motif of *niyoga*, Vasiṣṭha fathers Kalmāṣapāda's heir. As in the Viśvāmitra legends, we find the theme of *varṇa* intermixture, but it is in the opposite, normativizing direction. Like Ṛcīka's marriage to Viśvāmitra's elder sister Satyavatī, the Brahman Vasiṣṭha's penetration of Kṣatriya domesticity is lauded and he is "honored by the king" (*Mbh* 1.168.23). The *niyoga* theme responds to the *kāmadhenu* legend as a śāstraic reversal of Viśvāmitra's penetration into Brahman domesticity, reasserting "the immutable paternal authority of the brahmans over the ruling class" (Goldman 1978, 355).[65]

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[65] The *niyoga* issue remains a problem after the narrative's conclusion. The Kalmāṣapāda legend is followed by two other closely connected stories, the *rākṣasa*-sacrifice by Vasiṣṭha's grandson Parāśara,

Through its focalization of Vasiṣṭha, and through the inversion of (paradigmatic) motifs and (syntagmatic) moves, the Kalmāṣapāda story is able to restructure the legend that precedes it. The storyworld now no longer allows against-the-grain movements across *varṇa*, for only devastation results from Kalmāṣapāda's boundary crossings. Furthermore, *varṇa* is now unquestionably hierarchical; in the end, the Brahman safely and authoritatively penetrates the Ksatriya's most domestic space—his queen's womb. If the *kāmadhenu* legend induces a critical questioning of *varṇa*, then the Kalmāṣapāda narrative that immediately follows answers by way of a prohibition: "Do not ever disrespect Brahmans" (*Mbh* 1.168.9).

The *Śalya Parvan's kāmadhenu* (*Mbh* 9.39)

In the ninth book of the *Mahābhārata*, the *kāmadhenu* story is told during a narration of Balarāma's *tīrtha*-pilgrimage (a pilgrimage of sacred fords) as he travels to come observe the mace-duel between Duryodhana and Bhīma—a pilgrimage filled with stories of other notable liminal figures. Viśvāmitra is listed as one of several notable men who attained Brahmanhood at a *tīrtha* blessed by a sage named Ārṣṭisena.[66] After the cow's army managed to destroy the forces of Viśvāmitra, he performs *tapas* at the *tīrtha*. Though he was to undergo a series of unspecified trials and tribulations—"Repeatedly,

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who is upset at his father's murder, and the story of Aurva that Vasiṣṭha tells Parāśara to circumvent cosmic annihilation, but Arjuna still asks a leftover question: "What was the reason that King Kalmāṣapāda enjoined [*niyojita*] his wife to the all-powerful *guru*? And, cognizant of the highest worldly *dharma*, why did the mighty Vasiṣṭha have forbidden intercourse" (*Mbh* 1.173.1-2)? The answer also involves a narrative of *varṇa* conflict: during his *rākṣasa* curse, Kalmāṣapāda had devoured a Brahman while he was engaged in intercourse with his wife. In tears, the Brahman's wife curses Kalmāṣapāda: "If you come to your wife during her season, you will instantly lose your life. And that *ṛṣi* Vasiṣṭha, whose sons you have slaughtered, only through sleeping with him will your wife bear a child—that son will be the progenitor of your line, wretched King" (*Mbh* 1.173.18cd-19)!

[66] The others are Sindhudvīpa and Devāpi (*Mbh* 9.39.10). Ārṣṭisena, on earning Vedic knowledge without the help of his *guru*, through *tapas*, had instilled a three-fold boon onto this *tīrtha*, so that "there will be no threat of villainy here, and one shall attain copious results through scant efforts" (*Mbh* 9.39.8).

the gods created obstacles in his vow, but the great one's mind did not deviate from his control" (*Mbh* 9.39.25)—eventually the magnitude of his *tapas* impelled the god Brahmā to grant him the boon of Brahmanhood at this location. Like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Śalya Parvan* is celebratory towards Viśvāmitra's achievement, but ascribes it to a new phenomenon: the sacred power located in the geographical space of a *tīrtha*.[67]

The *Śalya Parvan* telling thereby involves a number of significant motif changes. Despite its Viśvāmitra-centered focalization, this version criminalizes his violent behavior as *adharma*.[68] Furthermore, Vasiṣṭha is not passive, and emphatically commands his cow to destroy the king's army.[69] For the *Śalya Parvan*, contrasting Vasiṣṭha's placid self-control with Viśvāmitra's temper is clearly not an issue; in fact, we are told nothing at all about the Brahmanic glories of Vasiṣṭha in this version, apart from the fact that he owns a hermitage and a cow. Most strikingly, there is an elimination of the miraculous feast, and the anonymous cow, though she does magically make soldiers, is in fact never referred to as a *kāmadhenu* (or, as is more typical, a *sarvakāmadhuk*—a cow of all desires). Combined with the continued elision of direct hostilities between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, these variations work to promote the *Śalya Parvan's* displacing

[67] As we shall see in our discussion of the *Skanda Purāṇa's* telling of the Triśaṅku story (in the following chapter), this physical localization of an ordinarily esoteric power-substance (*tapas*) is really why this sort of story is told—to render understandable (and at least potentially accessible), for ordinary humans, the superhuman power behind Viśvāmitra's extraordinary accomplishments. Evidence of this is provided in the contextual frame of the story: Balarāma, brother to Kṛṣṇa, hearing the legend of Viśvāmitra,

At that excellent *tīrtha*, donating great wealth, milk-cows, vehicles, furnishings, then gladly gave clothes and jewels, edibles, beverages, and adornments to the great twice-born Brahmans, honoring them. (*Mbh* 9.39.30-31)

[68] Viśvāmitra and his army, hearing of some trouble with *rākṣasas*, came upon the hermitage of Vasiṣṭha while he was away. There, "his soldiers committed many acts of misconduct [*tasya te sainikā rājaṁś cakrus tatrānayān bahūn*]" (*Mbh* 9.39.18). In a variant set of readings, "his soldiers killed many animals there" (*Mbh* 9.247*)

[69] Seeing his entire forest being ravaged, he shouted to his cow, "Let loose the ferocious Śabaras! [*sṛjasva śabarān ghorān iti svāṁ gām uvāca ha*]" (*Mbh* 9.39.20) No other 'outsider' armies are mentioned in this version, including *mlecchas*.

the transformative power of *tapas* into the physical space of a *tīrtha*, a sacred site promising "copious results through scant efforts [*api cālpena yatnena phalaṁ prāpsyati puṣkalam*]" (*Mbh* 9.39.8cd).

II. The Same old story: The kāmadhenu legend in the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa (DBhP 3.17) and the Skanda Purāṇa (SkP 6.167-171)

The *kāmadhenu* legend appears in two medieval purāṇic sources: the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (*DBhP* 3.17) and *Skanda Purāṇa* (*SkandaP* 6.167-169). The brief *Devībhāgavata* version is embedded in this *purāṇa's* extensive narrative of Sudarśana. In the midst of this story, the *kāmadhenu* legend is told by the minister Vidulla to his king Yudhajit, who is intent on attacking the sage Bharadvāja's *āśrama* in order to force out the queen Manoramā and her son Sudarśana who are hiding inside. The *kāmadhenu* legend is told as a *dṛṣṭānta* (illustration) to point out a basic political point: attacking a seemingly weak opponent should be done with care.

This eleventh- or twelfth-century telling undoubtedly presupposes both the *Ādi Parvan* and *Rāmāyaṇa* versions (and to some extent even the *Śalya Parvan* version); however, the story is told through a new, medieval lens.[70] It is now a cautionary narrative, and comes as the minister is trying to explain what happened to Viśvāmitra when he also tried to overpower a seemingly weak Brahman and to steal his cow.[71] In

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[70] According to Hazra, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* was composed in the eleventh or twelfth century, C.E., by a "Smārta Śākta Brahmin of Bengal...[who] migrated to Benares, (probably because it was the best place of residence for a Devī-worshipper)" (Hazra 1963, 353-359).
[71] As in *Mbh* 9.39, the word "*kāmadhenu*" is not employed to describe Nandinī. When Vasiṣṭha declared, "Certainly take her away by force if that is what you prefer—I will not, of my own volition, give you Nandinī out of my home" (*DBhP* 3.17.18), Viśvāmitra proceeded to do exactly that. The cow appealed to Vasiṣṭha, who testified to his powerlessness in this situation, whereupon Nandinī produced an army of *daityas* (demons) who devastated Viśvāmitra's army. This illustrates the problem of trying to date epic and Purāṇic subnarratives by their references. Though the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* is unanimously regarded as a

doing so, the *Devībhāgavata* espouses a Viśvāmitra-centered focalization, but it does not exactly celebrate his *tapas*: there is only suffering and lament for the king Viśvāmitra,[72] and in the end the minister warns his patron, "My King, you should also not engage in incredible hostilities [*vairam adbhutam*] that would certainly result in the destruction of your lineage, by engaging in a conflict with ascetics [*tāpasaiḥ saha saṁyugam*]" (*DBhP* 3.17.25). Viśvāmitra does in the end become a *brahmarṣi*, but the narrator seems more concerned with the fact that he is no longer a Kṣatriya, and his telling is a narrative of *varṇa* loss rather than gain.[73] The coercion (*vairabhāva*) of the weak is construed as detrimental to a king, and invading Brahman domestic space has lineage-ending consequences.[74]

P. V. Lalye has suggested that "Vasiṣṭha had put up with the insult of Viśvāmitra, while Viśvāmitra, prompted by jealousy, always sought to attack" (Lalye 1973, 235). Though such a situation does arise in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Devībhāgavata's* portrayal of Viśvāmitra as a king who loses his lineage directly engages with the larger narrative that frames it—the Sudarśana legend—and therefore the historical context of the *Devībhāgavata's* production. Kunal Chakrabarti has opined that the *Devībhāgavata*, as

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'late' purāṇa, (c.f. Hazra 1975, Rocher 1986, Lalye 1973) and certainly composed after the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, here we have no mention of the Pahlavas, Śakas, or Yavanas that cause Brockington to assign the episode a late date in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. Is it so late that the *Devībhāgavata's* composer has forgotten about these ethnic groups, or perhaps that their ideological relevance has ceased?

[72] "Sinful and suffering, he vehemently cursed the power of a Kṣatriya; having determined that Brahman power was more difficult to overpower, he engaged himself in *tapas* [*hanta pāpo 'tidīnātmā nindan kṣattrabalaṁ mahat | brāhmaṁ balaṁ durārādhyaṁ matvā tapasi saṁsthitaḥ ||*]" (*DBhP* 3.17.23). The mention of *brāhmam balam* and *ksattrabalam* alludes to the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Ādi Parvan* verses discussed above (*Rām* 1.55.23 and *Mbh* 1.165.42).

[73] As the sixteenth-century commentator Nīlakaṇṭha explains, "This is the essential point of the example (*dṛṣṭānta*) that the sage has given: If you were to act altogether in this way, then your condition will also become also like his" (*DBhP* [*NP*] 3.17.25).

[74] The weak, in this case, means not only the Brahman Bharadvāja, but the prince Sudarśana, who will later undergo a series of adventures and eventually defeat the king, in a battle in which "the Devī herself entered the fray" (Lalye 1973, 335).

one of the Bengal *purāṇas*, seeks to incorporate localized (Bengali) perspectives into a Brahman-centered cultural hegemony (Chakrabarti 2001). This legend, perhaps, gives evidence that the textual maneuver Chakrabarti deems the 'Purāṇic process' was a bit more complicated than one-directional cultural assimilation. Rather than a model of text-composition in which new 'Little Tradition' wine is placed in old 'Great Tradition' bottles, here we have quite the reverse situation: an epic legend about a Vedic *ṛṣi* has been embedded within a new purāṇic story of Sudarśana, which "is certainly taken from some popular source" (Lalye 1973, 225).[75] In this sort of 'inverse embedding,' the *Devībhāgavata* and other medieval purāṇic texts (such as portions of the *Skanda* that we consider next), engage in an intertextuality with their ancient sources that is not simply agglutinative but interpretive. In this case, we find that a legend told in the epics to represent *tapas* has been reinterpreted to comment on the transitivity of kingship and the hidden power of the weak. The legend's trope of loss of Kṣatriyahood comes during a time period (11th-12th centuries) in which, amidst shifting configurations of imperial polities (Inden 2000b), and languages and literatures (Pollock 2001), the appearance of *bhakti* made a tremendous impact on the nature of kingship in South Asia. It is no surprise then that the *kāmadhenu* story is couched inside the legend of Sudarśana, who wins his bride Śaśikalā and defeats Yudhajit due to his devotion to the Goddess.[76]

The story told in the seventeenth-century *Skanda Purāṇa* is by far the longest, most detailed version of the *kāmadhenu* legend aside from the *Rāmāyaṇa's*; it is also the

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[75] The Sudarśana legend shares many motifs with the *Mahābhārata's* legend of Vītahavya - a Kṣatriya also transformed into a Brahman, though due to the power of a sage's words, not through his own will (see Goldman 1977).

[76] As Lalye points out, "the important feature of the story of Sudarśana is active participation of the Devī in the battle to help Her devotee" (Lalye 1973, 336).

most pointedly Vasiṣṭha-centered account. Like the *Devībhāgavata's*, the *Skanda's* version is a direct borrowing from neither epic, but instead offers a distinctive recast of what by then was a well-known narrative. Like the *Ādi Parvan* version, the story begins with the motif of a royal hunt. The hunt can perhaps be construed as a twofold event: the slaughter of forest-dwelling animals[77] and the production of *rajas*-based meat.[78] The *Skanda Purāṇa*, amplifying the *Ādi Parvan* telling, places the violence of the hunt explicitly in contrast to the placidity of Vasiṣṭha's Brahman hermitage, and implicitly to the vegetarian menu of the *kāmadhenu's* magic meal.[79] When Vasiṣṭha orders Nandinī to feed Viśvāmitra and his army, the foods that the cow produces for the Kṣatriyas do not specifically include meat,[80] and the most arresting images of versions involving the feast motif are undeniably vegetarian.[81] D. N. Jha has discussed the "latitudinarian" attitudes

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[77] "In that forest, great sages, he killed bears [*varāha*], antelope [*sambara*], elephants [*gaja*], hyenas [*tarakṣa*], deer [*rūru*], rhinoceroses [*khadga*], and forest buffalo [*araṇya mahīṣa*], lions [*siṁha*], tigers [*vyāghra*], great snakes [*mahāsarpa*], and *śarabhas*" (*SkandaP* 6.167.12-13ab). Note that the first list (in verse 12cd) (except hyenas) are herbivores, while the second (13ab) are carnivores.

[78] *Rajas* (dust), is the quality of foods and bodies that produces vigor, movement, passion. This is in contrast with the quality of *sattva* (truth), which produces peace, clarity, and cleansing, and the quality of *tamas* (darkness), which produces stolidity, gravity, and inertness. Hariyappa has noted this connection of the *varṇa* categories to *guṇa* categorization of food in the legends of Viśvāmitra (Hariyappa 1953). Rather than this *guṇa* structure, White focuses on the Saussurean opposition between the cow and the dog—as the highest and lowest food producers—signifying the social oppositions between Brahmans and Untouchables, with Viśvāmitra as a mediating third (White 1992).

[79] The *Śalya Parvan* version supports the *Skanda's* depiction of Viśvāmitra's violent entry: "After a long journey, he happened upon Vasiṣṭha's hermitage. There, King, his soldiers committed many acts of misconduct. Just then, the sage Vasiṣṭha returned to his hermitage and looked upon his whole forest being ravaged" (*Mbh* 9.39.18-19). Two sets of manuscripts (T and G), instead of "committed many acts of misconduct," read "killed many animals there [*jaghnus tatra mṛgān bahūn*]" (*Mbh* 9.39.18d).

[80] While ambiguous terms such as *bhoksya* or *bhojana* might arguably be made of animal products, epic and purāṇic texts are not loathe to mention meat, even when it is served to Brahmans; Jha suggests that the Kalmāṣapāda legend implies that "meat was clearly a normal part of a brāhmaṇa's diet" (Jha 2002, 95, c.f. Brockington 1998, 225).

[81] In a passage omitted from the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*, Nandinī produces "steaming hot piles of rice that appeared like mountains; condiments and soups, as well as lakes of yogurt; wells filled with *ghee*, as well as piles of other edibles; thousands of edibles of the highest quality, all over the place; wines of several different kinds, and thousands of clothes and blankets of great quality" (*Mbh* 1.1753*).
Then, according to the text of the Critical Edition, she creates "Cultivated and wild foods, as well as herbs and milk, all six flavors, and ambrosia, and unequalled delicacies; eatables and drinkables, foods of great

towards vegetarianism within the *śāstras* (Jha 2002, 91-93), and has demonstrated that while "the idea of *ahiṁsā* seems to have made its first appearance in the Upaniṣadic thought and literature" (Jha 2002, 140), meat-eating and *ahiṁsā* have remained in uneasy coexistence throughout the long history of Sanskrit literature.[82] However, the violence of Viśvāmitra's hunt is noticeably amplified in the *Skanda*. Thus, even though Brahmans may have continued to keep a non-vegetarian diet in the medieval period (Jha 2002, 118), *ahiṁsā* is clearly positioned as the preferred, normative discourse within the storyworld of the *kāmadhenu* legend, since it is mapped onto the Brahman domestic space, while animal-slaughter is placed firmly within Viśvāmitra's Kṣatriya sphere of activity.[83]

The resulting conflict, the ferocious battle between Nandinī's *mlecchas* and Viśvāmitra's army, becomes the site of perhaps the *Skanda Purāṇa's* most intriguing innovations.[84] In other versions of the story, when the *mlecchas* utterly destroy his army, and sometimes his sons (*Rāmāyaṇa*), they are no longer a problem—either Viśvāmitra

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variety, as well as heated sauces made from ambrosia" (*Mbh* 1.165.10-11). Though the *Skanda Purāṇa* is not at all detailed in its description, meat is not specifically mentioned. Even Śabalā in the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not explicitly serve meat to the Kṣatriyas.

[82] Jha also includes Buddhist and Jain critiques of Vedic sacrifice as essential to the development of the *ahiṁsā* doctrine.

[83] The *Skanda Purāṇa* narration of Viśvāmitra's attempts to purchase the *kāmadhenu* also reopens the śāstraic questions of the epic tellings, making further polarizations of Brahman and Kṣatriya *varṇa*. Vasiṣṭha rejects Viśvāmitra's offer by referring to the scriptural authority of Manu: "Listen, King, to the eminent words of *smṛti*, which Manu himself said about the selling of cows: The Brahman who receives wealth from selling cows is regarded as a low-caste who sells his mother. (*SkandaP* 6.167.42-44). Despite the claim, this verse is not actually found in the *Manāva-dharmaśāstra*, though Manu and other śāstraic texts do insinuate that on a certain level, sale of cows was proscribed for Brahmans (Kane 1990, vol 2.1, 126-132). It is followed by Viśvāmitra's equally śāstraic counter-argument: "Whatever jewel appears in the domain of a king, Brahman, should belong to the king, as the experts of property know. This cow Nandinī is a jewel, and so she is mine—and I will take her by force, if you don't give her to me amicably" (*SkandaP* 6.167.46-47). Viśvāmitra's legal argument is elsewhere found only in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.52.9), and demonstrates how the narrative induces a negotiation between discourses. On a psychoanalytic level, the verse gives support to Goldman's argument that the *kāmadhenu* is a displacement of the Oedipal mother-figure, though as a negative example.

[84] Here, as in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the diversity of their names is lost—they are simply referred to as *mlecchas*.

defeats them (*Rāmāyaṇa*) and then challenges Vasiṣṭha directly, or he leaves in disgust (*Ādi Parvan*, *Śalya Parvan*, *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*). In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the *mlecchas* surrounded and attacked a lone and defenseless Viśvāmitra, after the fall of his armies (*SkandaP* 6.167.57). In an intriguing twist, Vasiṣṭha intervened, realizing that Viśvāmitra was about to die. Growing merciful, he said to Nandinī, "Protect that king who is surrounded by *mlecchas*. The king should by all means be protected, he by whose grace this whole world proceeds along a good path, and does not wander into impasse" (*SkandaP* 6.167.59-60). However, Vasiṣṭha was forced to rescue his *kāmadhenu* when a frenzied Viśvāmitra attacks her, unaware of her purpose:

> Then, when Nandinī had approached him to ward off the attack, Viśvāmitra raised his sword and began to strike her down. Vasiṣṭha, seeing that she was about to be killed, froze [*saṁstambhayāmāsa*] the king's arms and weapons. Then, king Viśvāmitra, shamefully in distress, said, with embarrassment [*vrīḍā*], to the great sage Vasiṣṭha: "Protect me, great sage, as I am being killed by these fierce *mlecchas*—remove this paralysis [*stambha*] from my arms. Because of my transgressions, the entirety of my vast army is destroyed, and so I will return to my palace, there is no use for battle. Even an obstinate person, attaining fortune and divine insight, does not stay in battle as long as I have, intoxicated with pride." (*SkandaP* 6.167.61-66)

Vasiṣṭha removed the paralysis and blessed him, but sent him off with a stern warning, one that echoes his warning to Kalmāṣapāda as well as Vidalla's warning in the *Devībhāgavata*: "Don't ever again be hostile towards Brahmans [*mā kārṣīr brāhmaṇaiḥ saha virodham bhūya eva hi*]" (*SkandaP* 6.167.69ab). *Varṇa* structure becomes quite literally crystallized: when Vasiṣṭha 'freezes' Viśvāmitra's arm, it invokes a relationship of power between the martial strength (*balam*) of the Kṣatriya, symbolized by the sword-arm of Viśvāmitra, and its 'encompassing' placid power of the Brahman, symbolized by

Vasiṣṭha's *mantra*. Finally, with great shame, Viśvāmitra crept back into the palace on foot in the cover of dusk, declaring:

> Damn the power of Kṣatriyas! Damn this valor, damn this way of life! The power of the Brahman is alone to be praised, and Brahmanic power is the single true power.[85] I should perform that action by which I may acquire the strength of a Brahman. Abandoning my own kingdom, I will engage in great *tapas*. (*SkandaP* 6.167.71cd-73)

The *Skanda's kāmadhenu* legend, like the *Ādi Parvan* telling, produces a normativizing discourse, and they both achieve this through an ideology against violence. However, the *Skanda Purāṇa's* telling relocates this discourse within a distinctively medieval historical context; this becomes apparent in this version's depiction of the 'outsider' *mleccha* armies. Clearly, they no longer function as 'structural equivalents' to Viśvāmitra, nor as protectors of Brahmanhood as Brockington suggests, nor are they 'fairy-tale' monsters as perhaps in the *Rāmāyaṇa's* version. Instead, they represent a real, hostile threat to kingship and kingdom, including Brahmans. The tables are turned, and the 'insider' Brahman must save the equally 'insider' Kṣatriya from 'outsider' barbarian invaders. The trope suggests a narrativized response to actual foreign incursion.[86] In the mutuality of the foreign threat to Brahmans and Kṣatriyas, Parasher has observed,

> The two sections of the brahmanical society that were most disturbed by foreign presence were the *brāhmaṇas* and the *kṣatriyas*. This was not because they were the more conservative sections of the society—for, when it suited them even they ignored rules laid down by the law-givers or, more cleverly, made new ones—but,

[85] This passage from the *Skanda Purāṇa* reads: "*dhig balaṁ kṣatriyāṇāṁ ca dhig vīryaṁ dhik prajīvitam* ‖ *ślāghyaṁ brahmabalaṁ caikam brāhmyaṁ tejaś ca kevalam* |" (*SkandaP* 6.71cd-72). It is not a direct borrowing, but a transformation of the famous epic verse, envisioning *tapas* as an explicitly *varṇa*-transforming activity.

[86] Parasher has comprehensively demonstrated the historical change in the semantics of the word *mleccha* from epic to purāṇic texts; as she points out, while in the epics *mlecchas* appear to be thought of as particular groups of pseudo-Kṣatriya outsiders, to be avoided by Brahmans, purāṇic texts take a much more aggressive stance centered on the "association of the *mlecchas* with the disruption of the *varṇa* oriented society" (Parasher 1991, 121).

> because their sanctioned authority was in danger of being weakened. (Parasher 1991, 252)

While in the case of the epics and early (pre-600 C.E.) purāṇas that are the focus of Parasher's study, this foreign threat can rightfully be restricted to "Yavana, Śaka and Kusana invasions," in the case of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, we have a slightly more complicated situation. According to Ludo Rocher, the section of the *Skanda* in which this narrative is found, (the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa*), shows the influence of Gujarati and can be dated to the seventeenth century (Rocher 1986, 234). In such a historical and geographical setting—a period (the seventeenth century) during which the concept kingship was undergoing religious and social redefinitions, (e.g., the *bhakti* movements, Islamic Sultanates, European colonization) and in a region that was at the time actively producing a distinct identity, these *mlecchas* likely represent Islamic (Turkish or Afghani) forces—not imagined 'others' like the *Rāmāyaṇa's* monkeys, but real foreigners who do not disappear once the story is over. At the very least, the inclusion of the motif of the Brahman rescuing the king from the *mleccha* represents a rethinking of the *mlecchas* within the storyworld as a threat to Brahmans as well as Kṣatriyas. Like the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Skanda* presents a narrative of lost Kṣatriya power, but from an actively Brahman-centered perspective, highlighting Vasiṣṭha's restorative capabilities and his heroism in rescuing the Kṣatriya king. In doing so, the *Skanda's kāmadhenu* legend questions the legitimacy of Kṣatriya power as well as reinforcing the supremacy of Brahmanhood as the means to rescue this power from the 'outsiders.' This is the reason why, after all, Viśvāmitra becomes a Brahman: to gain power.

For the sake of Brahmanhood, Viśvāmitra engaged in a series of austerities to accumulate *tapas*.[87] Brahmā had to eventually intervene, but even he could not permit Viśvāmitra to become a Brahman, asking him: "How can one born as a Kṣatriya become a Brahman? How can you express this desire that is contrary to *śruti and smṛti*? On the surface of this earth, that which isn't innate will never be. (*SkandaP* 6.168.18-19) This ideological impasse presents *varṇa* as an absolutely rigid system, in which movement is unimaginable even for the most exalted beings. Unlike Yudhiṣṭira's retrospective astonishment at Viśvāmitra's achievents at *Mahābhārata* 13.3, the problematic of *varṇa*-movement is built directly into the *Skanda's* telling of the *kāmadhenu* legend.

Also built-in is its solution: the Satyavatī legend. From amidst the crowd of *brahmarṣis* and *devarṣis* accompanying Brahmā, the Bhārgava sage Ṛcīka testified to his role in the whole matter. He announced to Brahmā:

> For his birth, I had infused a *caru* with Brahman *mantras*. From all sides, I had endowed him with the Brahman essence. And so, four-faced Brahmā, he is a Brahman in a Kṣatriya birth. Therefore, you should praise him as a *brahmarṣi*, mighty grandfather Brahmā—though he is situated in kingship, he has done good deeds worthy of a Brahman. (*SkandaP* 6.168.21-23)

Ṛcīka's testimonial is self-referential—the Satyavatī legend has already been told in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, and indeed both these subnarratives are embedded during an outer-frame geographical discussion: the *mahātmya* of the Hāṭakeśvara *tīrthas* along the Sarasvatī river. This interweaving, I suggest, is a supplementation actively used to resolve inconsistencies between related subnarratives, and to present a coherent vision of Viśvāmitra.

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[87] The details of these austerities appear to be imitations of the detailed descriptions of *tapas* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. (Compare *SkandaP* 6.168.2 with *Rām* 1.62.23, *SkandaP* 6.168.3-4 with *Rām* 1.50.26-27.)

The *Skanda* thereby produces a genealogical resolution to its structural dilemma, but Vasiṣṭha does not relinquish his opposition to Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood, and ensuing hostilities between the two sages escalate into armed conflict (*SkandaP* 6.168).[88] Nonetheless, Vasiṣṭha sticks to his conservative, śāstraic point of view: "I cannot call someone who is born a Kṣatriya [*kṣatriyajātam*] a Brahman, lotus-born Brahmā. And he cannot possibly kill me since he has been born as a Kṣatriya [*kṣatriyodbhava*]. Brahman *tejas* cannot be defeated by Kṣatriya *tejas* (*SkandaP* 6.171.24-25).[89] In other words, though genealogies suggest that Viśvāmitra is already a Brahman by birth (*jāti*), for the *Skanda Purāṇa's* Vasistha it is real-world *tejas*—which for Viśvāmitra is linked to his Kṣatriya 'existence' (*udbhava*)—that determines social status. Vasiṣṭha articulates a 'fundamentalist' śāstraic position that cannot allow even Ṛcīka's attempt at resolution, and thus generates a violent conflict between Viśvāmitra as icon of the 'bad Brahman' and Vasiṣṭha as icon of normative hierarchy, which 'spills over' into the larger text. The *Skanda Purāṇa* tries to resolve this conflict through supplementary narratives. The social questions generated by Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha's *varṇa*-conflict are 'answered' through the subsequent narrative of the *Skanda Purāṇa*: the ordinarily independent legend of Viśvāmitra's curse of the river Sarasvatī. The story of the river Sarasvatī is summarized as follows:

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[88] First, using incantations from the *Sāma Veda*, Viśvāmitra fashions a *śakti*, a female demonic force, and dispatches it unsuccessfully against Vasiṣṭha. Vasiṣṭha realizes what is happening and, using spells reputedly from the *Atharva Veda*, nullifies her dangerous power and deifies her as the goddess Dhārā. Subsequently, according to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, those who worship her "in the month of Caitra, in the eighth day of the waning moon" become free of disease for the rest of the year (*SkandaP* 6.168.53). Viśvāmitra, still determined to destroy Vasiṣṭha, fires weapon after magic weapon at him, all of which are countered by Vasiṣṭha (*SkandaP* 6.171). Though supplemental to the *kāmadhenu* legend, this direct confrontation between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha is undoubtedly a transformation of the *Bālakāṇḍa* version, and represents an effort on the part of the *Skanda* to synthesize the conflicting details of the *Ādi Parvan* and *Bālakāṇḍa* versions.

[89] "*brāhmyaṁ tejo na kṣattreṇa tejasā sampraṇaśyati*" (*SkandaP* 6.171.25cd).

Viśvāmitra curses the river Sarasvatī (*SkandaP* 6.172-173)

> After promising Brahmā he would no longer attack Vasiṣṭha with his divine weapons, Viśvāmitra tried to find weaknesses in Vasiṣṭha in order to destroy him. Eventually, seeing no other option, he summoned the river Sarasvatī, and told her to raise her water level up to the ears [*pūrṇaśrotram*], so that Vasiṣṭha might drown. (*SkandaP* 6.172.1-5)
>
> Afraid of being cursed, the river was agitated and said to Viśvāmitra, "I cannot commit treachery against Vasiṣṭha, and it is wrong for you to murder a Brahman.[90] Besides, the god Brahmā has already called you a *brahmarṣi*, so let go of your anger. There is no way I can carry out what you have planned for Vasiṣṭha." (*SkandaP* 6.172.6-11)
>
> Furious at her disobedience, Viśvāmitra cursed the river Sarasvatī: "Evil one, since you will not carry out what I have told you, a current of blood will arise in your water." And so Sarasvatī's water turned to blood. As a result, demons, ghosts, and *rākṣasas* [*bhūtapretaniśācarāḥ*] arrived at her banks, drinking, singing, dancing and making merry, while the ascetics who used to live along her riverbanks, including Vasiṣṭha, were forced to leave.[91] Viśvāmitra also went away, to a town named Camatkārapura, in the region of Hāṭakeśvara, to successfully acquire the powers of creation and compete with the god Brahmā. (*SkandaP* 6.172.12-22)
>
> For a long time, Sarasvatī's water remained bloody, until finally she approached Vasiṣṭha, full of grief, and begged for help. Vasiṣṭha agreed to help, and went to fig tree from which the Sarasvatī originated. Sitting on the ground in a yogic trance [*samādhi*], he split the earth at that spot with the Varuṇa *mantra*, and a large amount of water rushed out. And so there were now two holes from which the Sarasvatī originated, and water gushed out of one. He then forcefully pulled out the fig tree, and thus restored the water of the great river that used to be filled with blood. (*SkandaP* 6.173.1-15)

An epic variant of the Sarasvatī legend is found in the *Śalya Parvan* (*Mbh* 9.41-42), also in proximity to the *kāmadhenu* legend (9.39), while an early purāṇic version, closely resembling the *Śalya Parvan*, is found in the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (23.19).[92] The

[90] Says Sarasvatī: "*brahmarṣe na ca te yuktaṁ kartuṁ vai brahmaṇo vadham*" (*SkandaP* 6.172.7cd).
[91] "*pītvā pītvā pranṛtyanti gāyanti ca hasanti ca*" (*SkandaP* 6.172.16cd).
[92] The *Śalya Parvan's* telling of Sarasvatī appears 'downstream' from the *kāmadhenu* legend (*Mbh* 9.39) during Balarama's *tīrtha*-pilgrimage, the *Vāmana Purāṇa* version—perhaps from "the ninth and tenth century A.D."(Hazra 1975, 91)—tells this story quite identically to the *Skanda*, but quite independently of the *kāmadhenu* legend.

Skanda Purāṇa's transformative retelling, like the *Mahābhārata's* Kalmāṣapāda narrative, repairs the storyworld of the *kāmadhenu* legend in such a way that its counter-normative discourse is muted and the realworld boundaries of Brahmanhood are effectively resealed. In the *tīrtha*-centered *Śalya Parvan* version, Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra set up hermitages on opposite sides of the Sarasvatī, "engaged in a grueling battle of *tapas*" (*Mbh* 9.42.9); what this battle entailed and why it was conducted is left unexplained. Just like the forest path in the Kalmāṣapāda story, the Sarasvatī river represents a *varṇa* boundary dividing Brahman and Kṣatriya.[93] Though the river appears 'fluid,' crossing it proves impossible, but for the power of the *tīrtha.* The *tīrtha*, literally meaning 'a site of crossing,' and which primarily denotes a 'sacred river ford' is in the *purāṇas*, like *tapas* in the epics, a religiously sanctioned means of crossing structural boundaries and 'doing the impossible.'

Though they present an identically structured storyworld, and though the movements across these spatial boundaries do not vary, the most significant difference between the *Śalya Parvan* and *Skanda Purāṇa* versions is that Vasiṣṭha himself restores the Sarasvatī's purity in the later *Skanda Purāṇa*, while in the *Śalya Parvan*, this is accomplished by a group of anonymous *ṛṣis* on a *tīrtha*-pilgrimage. The result is a plot-complication not found in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, and one that highlights the *Mahābhārata's* active construction of Brahman *varṇa*. The *rākṣasas*, who had been feasting on the Sarasvatī's blood, appeal to the *ṛṣis* to show them favor, for in fact they are *brahmarākṣasas* (Brahman *rākṣasas*). They argue that because of their Brahman status, compounded with the *ṛṣis*' negligence towards them, the *ṛṣis* will have served only to

[93] In the *Mahābhārata* and *Vāmana Purāṇa* versions, Viśvāmitra is unquestionably a Brahman.

increase their numbers, since "those that harass Brahmans become *rākṣasas*" (*Mbh* 9.42.17). The Brahmans, full of compassion and but also threatened, then declare a śāstraic definition of *rākṣasa* food: "that on which a fly has sneezed, that which is leftover or tasted, or that on which hair has fallen, or that which has come into contact with dogs, or that which is injurious" (*Mbh* 9.42.22)—and direct the *rākṣasas* to another *tīrtha* along the Aruṇā, a tributary of the Sarasvatī, where they will be able to exculpate their sins and ascend to heaven. In doing so, the *Śalya Parvan* displaces the counter-normativity of Viśvāmitra onto the 'Brahman-*rākṣasa*'—a mixed-breed creature resonant with the 'Kṣatriya-*rākṣasa*' Kalmāṣapāda. Both narratives produce a warning not to harass Brahmans, and thereby reconfigure the *kāmadhenu* legend's ruptured storyworld to normativize its implications for realworld *varṇa* discourse.

It is in the discursive spaces generated by subnarratives, therefore, that epic and purāṇic texts 'rethink' the *śāstras*. The *kāmadhenu* legend questions the limits of *varṇa* through a narrative mapping in which Brahmanhood and Kṣatriyahood are projected onto the domestic spaces of the storyworld. Then Viśvāmitra crosses the line and questions are raised. However, these questions are not left unanswered: the textual performance of the *kāmadhenu* legend—its embedding and supplementation—controls how the audience may interpret his boundary crossing. Either through locating the source of this anomaly in the power of *tapas* (*Rāmāyaṇa*, *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*) or *tīrtha* (*Śalya Parvan*), Viśvāmitra-centered versions valorize these counter-normative religious phenomena, leaving normative social structure intact; Vasiṣṭha-centered versions (*Ādi Parvan*, *Skanda Purāṇa*), on the other hand, juxtapose the *kāmadhenu* legend with ones that either invert the situation (Kalmāṣapāda) or try to fix it (Sarasvatī), nullifying the counter-normative

implications of the legend. These techniques of embedding and supplementation, I argue, are formal aspects of textual performance—a weaving together of subnarratives into the larger epic text in order to raise and answer questions about *varṇa*. But what are the implications of these enacted relationships between story and discourse to realworld performers and audiences that make them 'traditional'?; in order to investigate the hermeneutics of performance, we now turn to the *kāmadhenu* legend in contemporary Marathi *kīrtan*.

III. Going into the Cave: Interpreting the kāmadhenu legend in nāradīya kīrtan

The textual analysis of the epic and purāṇic *kāmadhenu* has produced a 'web of intertextuality' surrounding a central puzzling narrative. The puzzle is consistent throughout all of the Viśvāmitra narratives, and it operates on two levels. On the level of story, the question is, 'how did Viśvāmitra become a Brahman?' while on the level of discourse, the question is, 'what is a Brahman?'—or, more generally, 'what is caste?' It is during performance that these dimensions interact, and the previous chapter has demonstrated how discursive categories (*varṇas*) are mapped onto storyworld spaces (domesticities) through performance. Here, I will explore how performers weave together supplementary narratives around the *kāmadhenu* legend to normativize the crossing of *varṇa*/domestic boundaries. Doing so will involve a discussion of how *kīrtankārs* use the *pūrvaraṅga-uttararaṅga* structure of a *nāradīya kīrtan* to induce a 'homology' between the purāṇic storyworld and the real world of the 'ordinary' Brahman devotee.

The *kāmadhenu* legend, like many of the Viśvāmitra legends, is not commonly told in *kīrtan*, in favor of popular Vaiṣṇava or *sant* narratives. A version appears in

Balasaheb Panta Pratinidhi's *Kīrtan-sumanāhār* (2nd edition, 1929), in which the legend is told from a Vasiṣṭha-centered perspective.[94] This *kīrtan* applauds his resolve against Viśvāmitra's martial force and celebrates Viśvāmitra's giving up of *ahaṁkār* (egoism).[95] Panta Pratinidhi written *kīrtan* presents both *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga*, choosing a Tukārām *abhaṅga* ("*ahaṁkāra to nāśī bheda, jagī̃ nindya ovāḷā* ‖") for his initial exposition about the perils of *ahaṁkār*. His *ākhyān*, though it is based on the *Ādi Parvan* version, weaves in the Menakā story, alludes to Triśaṅku and Viśvāmitra's counter-creation (*pratisṛṣṭi*), and finally ends with an episode, which Kolhatkar-*buwā* later told as a *dantakathā* (meaning folk narrative, but literally, 'teeth-tale'). Irate at the fact that Vasiṣṭha continued to deny his *brahmarṣi*-hood and chidingly called him "*rājarṣi*," Viśvāmitra crept in Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* in the cover of night "with the intention of braining Vasiṣṭha with a large stone as he slept" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 317). The plan is cancelled and the conflict resolved when Viśvāmitra overhears Vasiṣṭha conversing with his wife at night, copiously praising Viśvāmitra's hard work and *tapas*, and admitting that he has been intentionally harassing Viśvāmitra to get him to lose his *ahaṁkār* (Panta

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94 Erudite and scholarly, the 'Chief of Oundh' Panta Pratinidhi's early twentieth-century collection of *kīrtans* is infused with Sanskrit verses from Śaṅkara, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the epics, and Vedic texts, in addition to Marathi *sant* poetry, Hindi verses from Tulsidās, and even English literature—so that "one may more effectively convince people educated in the new fashion" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, ii). As Cintaman Vinayak Vaidya explains in his preface, Panta Pratinidhi felt that "in *kīrtan* these days the connection between *pūrvaraṅga* and *ākhyān* is often lost." Vaidya goes on to add: "Therefore, through the *kīrtans* given in this text, the reader will for the first time realize the improvement made so that [this connection] may not be lost and so that even in the *pūrvaraṅga* a single subject may be held and supported through reinforcing, well-known sayings—poems, *abhangs*, and so on—of *sadhu*-poets, and even the narrative in the *ākhyān* should be of a certain type that by example it should make more clear the essential principle instructed in the *pūrvaraṅga*" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, i).

95 Such *kīrtans* thereby de-emphasize the casteist implications of the legend in favor of social ethics. "The essence," claims Panta Pratinidhi, "is that while *ahaṁkār* and attachment to objects [*viṣayavāsanā*] are kept awake, no one will attain *siddhi* [spiritual perfection]. Regardless of what his *varṇāśrama* is, someone who has first cast off his selfishness [*svārtha*] and who should engage in the uplifting [*uddhāraṇ*] of society, only he will be successful" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 319).

Pratinidhi 1929, 318-319).[96] Panta Pratinidhi's telling is a standard *nāradīya kīrtan* approach to Viśvāmitra, conceiving of his progression from Kṣatriyahood to Brahmanhood as a metaphor for personal refinement—a movement away from *ahaṁkār*. On the other hand, Kolhatkar-*buwā's* telling of what he felt to be the 'original' *Bālakāṇḍa* narrative produced a contrary religious homology.

On December 3, 2000, Vaman V. Kolhatkar commenced the *kāmadhenu* legend as a part of his month-long Viśvāmitra *kīrtan* at Nārad Mandir. His telling would continue for three days (December 3-5, 2000). The *pūrvaraṅgas* during his *kāmadhenu* legend, as he put it, involved having to go "into a cave" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). This was the most theoretically dense period of his month of *kīrtans*, in which he introduced the audience to the Upaniṣadic theory of the five *kośas*, and he was very much aware that such topics are normally not told in *kīrtan*. Kolhatkar's *uttararaṅga* followed the *Rāmāyaṇa* almost exactly, but through folk filters of domesticization, contemporization, and localization.[97] Though the text was the same as the Viśvāmitra-centered *Bālakāṇḍa* version, Kolhatkar articulated a Brahman folk perspective: Viśvāmitra did not simply become a Brahman, but entered into 'our Brahmanhood,' and Kolhatkar was more interested in explaining Brahman identity (i.e., the meaning of *brahmarṣi*) rather than Viśvāmitra's individual 'will to power.'[98] Kolhatkar-*buwā*

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[96] This motif is identical to the explanation for why Viśvāmitra harasses Hariścandra (see Chapter Five).

[97] Kolhatkar also quoted Vālmīki in many places, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* version of the "*dhig balaṁ kṣatriyabalaṁ*" verse; describing the initial amity between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, he explained, "You might think I am making this up, but it is all in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*...Just take a look at the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, and what I am telling will seem insufficient. So much more is written there" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). While he included *Rāmāyaṇa*-only events such as the death of Viśvāmitra's sons, the *astras*, and the *brahmadaṇḍa*, Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* did take into account the *Ādi Parvan* version—for example, the *kāmadhenu* was named Nandinī, not Śabalā.

[98] Identifying Viśvāmitra as the founder of his Brahmanic *gotra* (subcaste), the Kauśika *gotra*, Kolhatkar-*buwā* holds perhaps more of an attachment to the sage than most Brahmans to Viśvāmitra.

constructed this Brahman identity by domesticizing Viśvāmitra's boundary-crossings—his initial entry into Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama*, the *kāmadhenu's* magic feast, and Viśvāmitra's final, vengeful reentry.

Panta Pratinidhi's *kīrtan* begins with the *Ādi Parvan's* motif of the royal hunt, describing how Viśvāmitra set off on an expedition, but in the heat of the midday sun, entered Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* for just a drink (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 306). Viśvāmitra was then obliged to stay for a meal at the Brahman's insistence: "the King had no other recourse but to say 'Yes'" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 306).[99] On the other hand, in Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* Viśvāmitra had set out "to show the people of his kingdom the king's strength (*baḷ*) and to strike fear in his enemies" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). Kolhatkar-*buwā* then detailed Viśvāmitra's entry into the *āśrama* in such a way as to make a śāstraic point:

> Viśvāmitra saw Vasiṣṭha, came running up to him, and he washed his hands and feet—to the elbow and the *dhotar* (loin cloth), like I had said the other day: when there is no opportunity to bathe, you should at least do this. Otherwise, it's just come home and just sit down to eat, and then you take the *dish and you sit in front of the TV. This is disgusting, very bad. There is a *śāstra* to this, and we should behave according to the *śāstra*. Otherwise, if you do the wrong thing, your *saṁskārs* [external effects] are always troubled. Viśvāmitra did all this, *ācaman* [ritual mouthwashing] and so on, and did a *sāṣṭāṅga namaskār* [full-body bow] to Vasiṣṭha. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

Kolhatkar's juxtaposition of an urban, middle-class domesticity—eating a dishful of food in front of the television without taking time to śāstraically enter the home—clearly invoked a contemporary model of Vasiṣṭha's domestic space, but also employed the

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[99] The situation Panta Pratinidhi creates here is a typical domestic moment of *āgraha* (insistence), familiar to anyone who has visited upon a Brahman home, of having to endure patiently the lavish hospitality and waves of food and drink that is expected to be poured onto guests in contemporary Maharashtra, in which "No" is an impossible answer.

ancient narrative, with its traditional śāstraic discourse, to critique the problems of modern Puneri lifestyles.

A second point in the narrative where Kolhatkar interpreted Viśvāmitra's crossing of domestic boundaries into everyday terms was the *kāmadhenu*'s magic feast. Panta Pratinidhi's *kīrtan*, breaking out of its verse form for a *kaṭāv* (a prose poem) elaborated the aspects of this feast in vivid, mouth-watering, but entirely vegetarian detail (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 306-307). Kolhatkar, however, suggested that the cow "gave meat for meat-eaters, vegetables for vegetarians" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000); the feast "was not like a *bhaṭurḍā's*," he explained.[100] "They are Kṣatriyas and they have to do battle. And they aren't going to need *dūdh-bhāt* (milk-rice). Vaman-*buwā* Kolhatkar is supposed to eat *dūdh-bhāt*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). By serving meat to the storyworld Kṣatriyas and *dūdh-bhāt* to the realworld *kīrtankār*, Kolhatkar's performance actively resituated the feast in the gastronomy of today's Maharashtrian Brahman, but made it a point not impose vegetarianism upon the purāṇic Kṣatriya, keeping these two worlds distinct.

We had argued that Viśvāmitra's second, violent entry into Vasiṣṭha's *āśrama* represented a conflict of power between *varṇas*, and not surprisingly, *kīrtan* versions displace this uncomfortable social issue onto one of personal character, in their understanding of Viśvāmitra's rage. Panta Pratinidhi follows the *Ādi Parvan* and does not have Viśvāmitra reenter the *āśrama*; however, through his depiction of Viśvāmitra's egotism at Vasiṣṭha's refusal to sell him the cow, Panta Pratinidhi's *kīrtan* is highly

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[100] '*Bhaṭurḍā*' is a non-Brahman slang term for a Brahman.

critical of Viśvāmitra's failure as a king.[101] He explains: "Here, the person ordering them to completely steal the instrument of the Brahman's livelihood [*yogakṣema*] is the king himself, that is, he who ought to be the one to protect him" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 310).

In the early twentieth century, *nāradīya kīrtan* increasingly became a cultural space in which a developing nationalist politics used the purāṇic storyworld to resist imperial rule. Evidence for this may be found in Panta Pratinidhi's *kīrtan*, as the flaws of Viśvāmitra as king suggest the flaws of the British Raj. On the other hand, in a twenty-first century climate in which nationalist *kīrtan* is increasingly becoming devoted to anti-Muslim and anti-Christian Hindutva rhetoric, Kolhatkar's 'post-political' approach is more interested in keeping storyworld politics distinct from realworld politics, for in his *kīrtan*, Vasiṣṭha declares: "A Kṣatriya is one who protects the good and slays the evil. The way you are acting is how the police of the twenty first century are going to act. This is not correct" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)! Despite a metaphoric relationship to modern 'Kṣatriya' police, Viśvāmitra remains distinctly a purāṇic character, that is, one belonging to the remote past:

> Before, when he had come, he had left aside his sandals, he had left aside his sword, he had washed his feet, and he had bowed down to Vasiṣṭha. But now, no way! He's covered head to toe in armor, he has shoes on, he has his bow, he bears a sword, he wields various types of *astras*, and it's *dhānna dhikiṭa dhātraka dhikiṭa katagadīgana tāgetīrikiṭa…* (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

Viśvāmitra's entry into Vasiṣṭha's home here is done in a violently Kṣatriya character, with armor, weapons, *astras*, and a raucous, regal *tabla* rhythm known as *lāl qillā* (Red

[101] Panta Pratinidhi explains: "In order to make Vasiṣṭha understand that his country's prosperity depends on his strength, and that no Brahman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, or Śūdra who wished to be successful dares disregard his commands, [Viśvāmitra reminds Vasiṣṭha that] 'You are a weak Brahman and I one of radiant Kṣatriya power' [*brāhmaṇ tũ durbaḷasā kṣātrateja mī*]" (Panta Pratinidhi 1929, 308).

Fort).[102] There is no ritual washing of feet, no honorific greetings; it is truly an invasion, as Viśvāmitra declares: "Hey, Brahman!! Have I come to your house to eat *puraṇ poḷī* and *vaḍā sāmbār*? Get up! Get ready to die"![103] Through these gastronomic anachronisms, Kolhatkar presented both of Viśvāmitra's entries as resembling visits to a modern-day Brahman home, so that his audience, murmuring recognition throughout, could share Vasiṣṭha's experience.

This comparitive analysis of two *uttararaṅgas* suggests that *nāradīya kīrtan*, as a public genre of folklore, creates a performance space in which Brahman identity is articulated and represented as 'natural.' A. K. Ramanujan has described genres of South Asian folklore as ordered by domestic and public poles of performance: "The domestic genres are close to ordinary speech, whereas the public ones use special styles, formulaic prose, verse, song, dialogue as well as ordinary speech, accompanied by costume, assistants, instruments, props…" (Ramanujan 1999, 490). In this sense, *kīrtan* is a public genre, since it usually is performed in the outer environs of a temple, and is performed by travelling, paid professionals before a large, fairly anonymous audience.[104] *Nāradīya kīrtan* therefore is hardly the same performance context as a grandmother telling tales in the kitchen. While perhaps not as 'public' as a theatrical performance, *kīrtan* nonetheless has a long history of engagement with more classical and literary cultural forms,

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[102] The *bol* is as follows: "*dhānnadhikiṭa dhātrakadhikiṭa katagadīgana tāgetīrikiṭa, naṅganaṅganaṅga naṅgatīrikiṭa dhātrakadhikiṭa katagadīgana*." I must thank my *guru*, Pt. Suresh Samant of Sadashiv Peth, Pune, for teaching me this *bol* in February 1998, as well as continuing to immerse me into the vast treasures of his tabla *gharāṇā* during my stays in Pune.

[103] *Puraṇ poḷī*—chapāttī bread filled with a sweet and buttery ḍāl paste—is a typical Maharashtrian Brahman food, rich and laborious to prepare; *vaḍā sāmbār*, not Maharashtrian but South Indian in origin, is nonetheless a typical snack offered to guests in a Brahman home in contemporary Pune, and through Kolhatkar's localizing use of these images, the Puneri audience immediately grasped the transgressive nature of Viśvāmitra's second coming.

[104] For a discussion of temple spaces and levels of sacredness see Fuller 1984.

including epic and purāṇic texts. As a folk genre, therefore, *nāradīya kīrtan* involves the creation of an inclusive and embracing public space in which 'official' versions of epic and purāṇic narratives are made understandable to a contemporary audience. And so, at Nārad Mandir every day between 6 and 7:30 p.m. in December 2000, we might say that a negotiation of discourses would take place. As he presented his narrative text, Kolhatkar-*buwā* was first compelled to define what he meant by Brahmanhood, marking out a cultural boundary. This, I suggest, is the reason for folkloric domesticization, localization, and contemporization of epic and purāṇic legends—it is through these processes that performers and audiences jointly participate in the drawing of cultural boundaries. Once a *buwā* has defined this boundary—not simply of what it means to be a Brahman, but of what *he* means by Brahmanhood, and what his audience means by Brahmanhood—only then can he interpret what it means to cross it.

The interpretation of Viśvāmitra's boundary-crossing, not surprisingly, takes place through two sorts of supplementation. The principal theme of *nāradīya kīrtan* is the mutual supplementarity of religious discourse (*pūrvaraṅga*) and narrative (*uttararaṅga*), and like other text-centric *kīrtankārs*, the most compelling feature of Kolhatkar's erudite *kīrtan* is his ability to extemporaneously weave stories, anecdotes, songs, and religious-philosophical discourse together based on common threads of motifs and themes. Though Kolhatkar continually alluded to and digressed into telling non-Viśvāmitra narratives, here we shall analyze his embedding of two related narratives into his *uttararaṅga* telling of the *kāmadhenu* legend, the legends of Aurva and of Jamadagni's murder.

On December 3, 2000, Kolhatkar finished Satyavatī and began the *kāmadhenu* legend. During the transition, while describing the Bhārgava family of Ṛcīka, the

Brahman sage who married Satyavatī, he embedded the story of Aurva, Ṛcīka's father.

Here is a complete, word-for-word translation of his Marathi version:

> This Aurva—I'll tell you this story along the way, since it is a very important story. Aurva's story is very important. It so happened, that due to the grace of Dattātreya...A good thing may become bad! Through time, a good thing may take on a bad form. Just like milk that spoils is bad, becoming harmful to one's health.
>
> This big king named Sahasrārjun, the king of Mahiṣpati city. That [city] which is now Maheshwar—[he was] its king. He became very powerful and affluent due to the grace of Dattātreya. But many years went by like this, thousands of years, and he became intoxicated by it. He became intoxicated, and his sons, grandsons, great-grandsons—it was a huge family, and the family size kept increasing. His family was named the Haihayas. "*Hai Hai*"—that's how they are. What did they do? Until then, many sacrifices and offerings had been done in their family—there is the king Kṛtavīrya, and Kārtavīrya is his son, his name was Sahasrārjun, and he had done many sacrifices and donations, given great payments to Brahmans, and their *purohit* was from the Bhṛgu family.
>
> And then later when their sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons were born, then these sons, grandsons, great-grandsons started to have addictions. And just as now there are those governors and local chiefs, they started behaving this [corrupt] way. And because of their addictions, their money was lost. They grew needy of money. Then they went back to these Brahmans of the Bhṛgu family, and they told them, those *dakṣiṇās* [donations] that we had given you, return them to us! They asked, "When did you give them to us? Oh those! Our father had given to you. Our grandfather had given them to you." They said, "But...how could those still be around? Our *samsār* is carrying on." But they said, "This will not do!" Some Brahmans were frightened and they gave them, some others did not, and then they grew angry, and then they began to execute them. They began to execute the Brahmans of the Bhṛgu family. And when they began an enormous assault in order to kill them, the Brahmans went off running. Brahmans are always cowardly, you see. A Brahman is a cowardly creature. [Laughter] Because his true business is not about wielding weapons. Bravery and *tejas* and so on are *their* properties, and these have mercy, compassion, and peace—these are *their* original qualities. And so they took off running.
>
> And, in the womb of one of the Bhṛgu family's women among them, there was an embryo. And she's running, running, running, she's running for her life, but since there is a fetus in her womb, she could no longer run. But she was a *yoginī*—because the *ṛṣis* and their wives in the Bhṛgu family had all learned *yoga*—and so, since it was difficult to run, she took out that embryo temporarily and put it in her thigh. It is a strange story, listen to how it goes! She put him in

her thigh, that embryo—but the embryo in her thigh, how could it stay in her thigh? There's no room there! And so he cut open her thigh and emerged. She couldn't run, and it fell out of her womb.

And meanwhile, that prince there, who had come behind her to kill her along with her unborn child, since she was pregnant. They were also killing women. When he had come to kill her, that small boy that had been born, he saw him, that here is someone killing, and he looked at him with this sort of anger! And instantly that prince fell dead. This Aurva—this is just like Cyavana's story. Five or seven days ago we had told the Cyavana's story, and it's a story from the same family.

Now this Aurva, since he was born from the *ūru*, from the thigh, his name is Aurva. Now this Aurva, when he became older, now all of his paternal, maternal uncles—they're all dead, aren't they? All the people in his family have been murdered off. And so when he became of a discerning age, he became filled with anger. "Hey, so many people in my family have been slaughtered by those of the Haihaya family, now how can I eliminate them?" This sort of anger arose in his mind. And so he began to do *tapascaryā*.

He didn't just take a horse and tie a turban and pick up a gun and start doing "*hack!*" like this [gesturing violence].[105] [Laughter] He began to do *tapascaryā*. He did *tapascaryā* for a long time. And all the *pitṛs* [ancestors] became manifest. This is the story—it's in the *Mahabharat*, you see, this story. The *pitṛs* became manifest, and said, "Dear child, why are you doing this?" He said, "what do you mean 'what are you doing?' they have killed everyone in our family, the evil, Cāṇḍāḷa people in this king's family." They said, "That's not the issue, we are Brahmans, we must give mercy. Our deeds are not vindictive. Let it go." He said, "I won't be able to let it go so easily." The *pitṛs* went away, and again seeing his *tapascaryā* they again became manifest—this happened three times. He said, "you say so, but the rage in my inner consciousness does not disappear. So what can I do?" Then, the ancestors said to him, "That anger which is inside you, throw it into the ocean."

That is, immerse that fire form of your anger into the waters. This is the description that is given. Immerse the fire in the form of anger into the waters. And that fire that has been immersed into the oceans, that dwells in the ocean by the name of *vaḍavānala*. That is the *vaḍavānala*. It remains in the ocean, and because of it, in the ocean there are warm water currents like the *gulf stream. There are warm currents in the water, and the cause for these currents is the anger of Aurva. This is the clear description, you see. This story is told very briefly in

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[105] "*Hack!*" is the closest approximation I can manage of a set of untranscribable sounds Kolhatkar-*buwā* uses quite frequently to ornament his *kīrtans*.

> the *Rāmayaṇ*, but in great detail in the *Mahābhārat*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000)

Kolhatkar-*buwā* had not planned on talking about Aurva, but it is a story he likes to tell, and when it came to him while recounting the family history of the Bhārgavas, he digressed to extemporaneously tell the legend in about five or six minutes. Comparing it with the epic versions of this legend, already we can see places where folkloric processes are at work. In describing how Aurva tried to avenge his relatives' deaths, for example, Kolhatkar-*buwā* paints a hypothetical image of his mounting a horse, tying a turban, and readying a rifle. This is an anachronistic image of vengeance that the audience presupposes from modern literature, television, and film, but countered by the *tapas* that Aurva performs instead.[106]

Kolhatkar's telling also presents the events from a distinctly Brahman point of view, in which the Haihayas invade the Brahmanic home of the Bhṛgus and leave it in ruins, harmonic with the devastation Viśvāmitra lays on Vasiṣṭha's home. The vengeful emotions that pervade Aurva, and prompt his *tapas*, is a theme that resonates with Viśvāmitra's quest for *astras*, though it is inverted, since Viśvāmitra has lost not his elders, but his sons. The home invasion theme is also found in the story of Paraśurāma, in which Arjuna Kārtavīrya enters the home of Jamadagni, Rāma's father, and murders him ruthlessly. An echoing of Aurva's vengeance occurs in the Paraśurāma legend as Rāma Jāmadagnya goes on a rampage at the murder of his father.[107] Immediately after the

[106] The connection of the *vaḍavānala* fire, the cause of the ocean's agitation, with the Gulf Stream is also a contemporization, connecting a familiar but inexplicable modern-day phenomenon (warm water currents) with mythic power.
[107] Goldman has discussed how the Aurva legend is a repression, or a 'negative' articulation of the oedipal theme (a literal 'dousing of the fire'), and in the parallel situation of Rāma Jāmadagnya, there is a failure of this repression, and eventually an intermixture of *varṇa* as Rāma *does* in fact "start doing '*hack*.'"

Aurva story, Kolhatkar-*buwā* told of the birth of Paraśurāma, who "murdered Kṣatriyas. Meaning, he murdered like a Kṣatriya. He also murdered Kṣatriyas. It's all true, he did in fact murder" (Kolhatkar *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000). Immediately thereafter, he began to tell the *kāmadhenu* legend. The Aurva story, with its connecting motif of Kṣatriya home invasion and the theme of Brahman vengeance established a Brahman-centered perspective for the Viśvāmitra legend, articulating a working definition of Brahman identity in which the authoritative voice of Aurva's *pitṛs* are able to declare, "we are Brahmans, we must give mercy. Our deeds are not vindictive. Let it go" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 3, 2000).

The Bhārgava legends (Goldman 1977) present a situation that is clearly and consciously parallel to the Viśvāmitra legends, but involving often movements from Brahmanhood to Kṣatriyahood. Aurva's story presents many of the same motifs as the *kāmadhenu* legend in which the protagonist, Aurva, must displace the force of his *tapas* arisen from rage. Viśvāmitra does not do so, but neither does Paraśurāma in a Bhārgava legend that is even more strikingly similar to the *kāmadhenu* story. Rāma's father Jamadagni is slain as either Arjuna Kārtavīrya (*Mbh* 3.116-117) or his sons (*Mbh* 12.49-50) steal his cow, and Rāma Jāmadagnya, goes on his vengeful rampage, committing Kṣatriya genocide twenty one times over. In another important and impromptu supplement, Kolhatkar very briefly embedded this legend during his telling of the *kāmadhenu* story, in describing how Vasiṣṭha did *not* act when Viśvāmitra arrived ready to kill him with *astras*:

> [Vasiṣṭha said:] "I'm just going to stand here like this. I won't take up the bow." Jamadagni was able to take up the bow, but he still didn't take it up. Jamadagni *ṛṣi* was a king of the *yuddha śāstra*. He knew the *yuddha śāstra* to an

> incomparable extent. Jamadagni was Paraśurāma's guru. But when Sahasrārjun came to kill him, then he didn't take up arms, because [he thought]: "I'm a Brahman and so kill me, I am not worried. I will act only according to Brahman *dharma*."
>
> And so he gave up his life. Sahasrārjun cut him up. This is Jamadagni's story. Then Anasūyā did *satī*, and so we go to that place, what's it called? You've been to it, many of you ...[An audience member answers]... to Māhu! [audience murmurs.] There we find Anasūyā's temple. Oh how ancient is the history of India, and it's just lying around. But even now these sites still shine forth.
>
> Now this Jamadagni, he knew how to battle. He knew how to battle excellently. But he [Vasiṣṭha] had not learnt the arts of war…so it's not that *ṛṣis* don't know how to do battle, but Vasiṣṭha did not take up this recourse…Vasiṣṭha is just standing still, saying "Show me your strength (*baḷ*)." (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

Though it is only a brief mention, and not a complete telling, we can see that the context in which Kolhatkar-*buwā* inserted the Jamadagni narrative impacted the way in which it is told—as he was dramatizing Vasiṣṭha's perspective at Viśvāmitra's invasion, he found the theme of Brahman non-violence resonant with the Jamadagni legend. These two legends, as Hiltebeitel has noted, often have become fused together in popular form.[108] While the motif of a Kṣatriya taking a Brahman's cow by force is therefore the

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[108] Hiltebeitel has discussed how these two legends—the *kāmadhenu* and Paraśurāma—are mixed together and infused within folk myths of the origin of Agnivaṁśa Rajputs (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 439-475). Thus, in a 'popular mythology' recorded by nineteenth century British scholars, when Arjuna Kārtavīrya enters Jamadagni's *asrama*, "He had with him an army of 900,000 men, yet Jumudugnee entertained them all. Urjunoo astonished, enquired of his people how this sage, living in a forest, was able to entertain so many people! They could not tell. They saw nothing except a cow Bruhma had given him…Its name was Kamu Dhenoo…" (Podgson 1971, 5, note 1, as quoted in Hiltebeitel 1999b, 451). Arjuna takes the cow by force—killing Jamadagni—and then Paraśurāma unleashes his fury on the Haihayas. Then, "without Kṣatriyas, Brahmans rule. But their chief weapon, the curse, is unable to prevent the 'monstrous brood' of demons and infidels from scourging the land" (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 452). Viśvāmitra then performs a sacrifice at Mount Abu to create new Kṣatriyas to slay the demons: Paramaras, Caulukyas, Pratiharas, and Chauhans (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 453). In a more Viśvāmitra-centered *praśasti* from 1060 C.E. of the Parmār kings of Mālwa, when Viśvāmitra took Vasiṣṭha's cow, "the latter caused a hero to arise from the fire-pit (*agni-kuṇḍa*); that hero slew the enemies and recovered the cow; in reward thereof the sage gave him the name *Para-māra* or slayer of enemies" (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 444, quoting Hoernle 1905, 21). This 'Paramāra' *kāmadhenu* legend is found also in the late tenth century Sanskrit court epic *Navasāhasāṅka-carita* by Padmagupta Parimāla, under the Mālwa king Sindhurāja (ca. 997-1010) (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 444);

key linkage between these two legends, and indeed what resembles a psychoanalytic displacement of the oedipal theme (Goldman 1978), Kolhatkar-*buwā* was not interested in this, and instead focused on the meaning of Brahmanhood. Though Brahman sages may know the *śāstra* of battle, as Jamadagni does (but Vasiṣṭha does not), they do not use it (though Rāma Jāmadagnya does). While Jamadagni is cut down, unleashing Paraśurāma's explosion, Vasiṣṭha stands still, and engulfs his Kṣatriya opponent. Kolhatkar's brief account noticeably shifts the focus from the figure of Paraśurāma, whose violent counter-normative behavior fuels the epic versions of narrative, onto Jamadagni, who dies remaining true to "Brahman *dharma*"—much in the same way that the *Ādi Parvan* treats the death of Śakti at the hands of Kalmāṣapāda.

Kolhatkar's performance also localized the Jamadagni legend, tying it specifically to a temple in Māhu (in Madhya Pradesh) dedicated to the *sati* of his wife "Anasūyā." However, Jamadagni's wife is Renukā, and Anasūyā is generally regarded to be the wife of the sage Atri, who gives birth to the semi-divine Dattātreya. Despite the mix-up of details, through Kolhatkar's aside we may notice the negotiation involved in the telling of stories during performance. The *kīrtankār*, especially when embarking on a tangential story like this one, presents mythology extemporaneously, and the audience then becomes directly involved in its performance by verifying the details. In this case, they contributed the site of the temple, and murmured and nodded in assent, acknowledging the attachment of the narrative to geography, but these performance dynamics may also result in the failure of narrativization.

Hiltebeitel however, sees the cow-theft motif as something "*drawn into* the fire-birth myth because it provides variants of some of its other themes" (Hiltebeitel 1999b, 459).

While the audience was able to supply forgotten details in this case, on another occasion, it did not happen. When describing Viśvāmitra's acquisition of Śiva's *astras*, Kolhatkar-*buwā* started to explain the origin of the *astras* themselves. "Dakṣa Prajāpati has a son. I've forgotten his name, and he has Jayā and Vijayā..." (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000). He then paused for a bit to remember the son of Dakṣa, and then he turned to me, seated in the audience, and asked, "Do you remember his name?" Unfortunately, I was of no help, and neither were the other listeners at Nārad Mandir, and so Kolhatkar offered only a bare outline: "He has two daughters named Jayā and Vijayā. And their sons, you see, are all the *astras*. These stories we find in the old texts." He then repeated again what he had initially said as a way to seal off this tangent and return to his primary story: "What are the *astras*? Dakṣa Prajāpati has a son. I've forgotten his name but he has two daughters, Jayā and Vijayā, and they are their sons" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000). He then resumed the *kāmadhenu* story.[109]

Memory may indeed have distorted his storytelling, but comparing this episode with Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s other supplemental legends of Aurva and Jamadagni, I suggest that this non-telling had more to do with a dissonance of motifs. Whereas the *kāmadhenu* legend, Aurva, and Jamadagni all share the motif of Kṣatriya intrusion into Brahman domestic space, there is no such motif in the *astras* origin myth. That is, the story did not need to be told, because it had no formal resemblances to the main narrative. This process of performance takes place in a living, free-flowing, impromptu form during a *kīrtan*, but

[109] Here the *kīrtankār* used repetition and musical harmony with the *peṭī* player to invoke an authoritative voice, instead of embarking on what I feel would have been a supplemental purāṇic narrative had Kolhatkar (or I, or anyone else in the audience) remembered the name of Dakṣa's son.

in an undoubtedly more methodical manner during the interwoven composition of epic and purāṇic subnarratives as a textual performances.

If these texts are performances, what exactly do they try to do? That is, how does the insertion of these texts transform the narratives they supplement? The common motif that the Aurva, Jamadagni, and *kāmadhenu* legends share, the Kṣatriya transgression of Brahman domestic space, points to the central question of a Kṣatriya 'will to power,' of self-determination and dominance.[110] Most *kīrtankārs*, telling this narrative from a Vasiṣṭha-centered point of view and treat it as a failure, a stiff lesson for Viśvāmitra on the perils of *ahaṁkār* (e.g., Panta Pratinidhi 1929). On the other hand, Kolhatkar-*buwā* chose to amplify the *Bālakāṇḍa's* Viśvāmitra-centered perspective, regarding his bout with Vasiṣṭha as the initial step in Viśvāmitra's ascension to *brahmarṣi*-hood. He used this narrative movement as a homology; rather than presenting a story about ancient social fluidities or conflicts, Kolhatkar used the *kāmadhenu* legend to illuminate the intricate relationships between *dharma* and *bhakti*. This was the continuing objective of all his *pūrvaraṅgas*, and indeed has been so throughout practically his entire *kīrtankār* career. During the *kāmadhenu* legend, he tied Viśvāmitra's narrative movements to *bhakti* and *dharma* through the Upaniṣadic theory of *kośas* ('sheaths' or 'layers').[111]

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[110] In the *Mahābhārata*, this movement places the *kāmadhenu* legend placed in contrast with two other legends involving *varṇa* boundary-crossing: the stories of Vītahavya, a Kṣatriya who 'accidentally' became a Brahman, and Mātaṅga, a Śūdra who, like Viśvāmitra, performed *tapas* in order to become a Brahman, but failed.

[111] The five *kośas—anna*, *prāṇa*, *manas*, *vijñāna*, *ānanda—*are discussed in the second chapter of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, as a way of knowing "*brahman* as real, infinite, placed in the cave, and in the high heaven [*brahmavid āpnoti param tad eṣābhyuktā satyaṁ jñānam anantam brahma yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyām parame vyoman so 'śnute sarvān kāmān saha brahmaṇā vipaścitā iti*]" (*TaittirīyaU* 2.1.1). After describing the general nature of these five *kośas* (*TU* 2.2-5), the *Taittirīya* dwells on the identity between *brahman* and *ānanda* (*TU* 2.6-9). In the next chapter, the *ṛṣi* Bhṛgu asks his father Varuṇa about *brahman*, and Varuṇa instructs him to do *tapas* (*TU* 3.1.1). Then, having done *tapas*, Bhṛgu returns, "understanding that *anna* is *brahman* (*'annam brahmeti vyajānāt*'), since creatures are born from food, creatures live on

Kolhatkar's exposition of the *kośa* theory came in two stages. First, on December 4, 2000, the second day of the *kāmadhenu kīrtans*, he mapped out an 'interior space' of the individual—meaning the relationships between the *antaḥkaraṇ* (the inner consciousness), and the *saṁskārs* (transformations, effects, influences) upon it from the outside world. On the next day, he "entered the cave" of *kośa* theory, ordering the five (external) *kośas* of the body and how they relate to this inner world.[112] Throughout both days, the ostensible purpose of Kolhatkar's *pūrvaraṅga* was to use the fourteenth-century *Pañcadaśī's* reception of Upaniṣadic metaphysics to understand the meaning of *brahmarṣi*-hood, and Viśvāmitra's stage-by-stage progression towards this title. Through *kośas*, Kolhatkar's *pūrvaraṅga* homologized Viśvāmitra's narrative movement towards *brahmarṣi*-hood with the *bhakti* movement towards liberation.

The first day's *pūrvaraṅga* began with the problem of interiority. In the Satyavatī *kīrtans* (discussed in Chapter Two), Kolhatkar had developed the notion that the basic difference between *ṛṣi* and *sant*, and so also between Sanskrit dharmic literature and Marathi *bhakti* literature, is their mutual relationships to the Vedas. While the *sants* demonstrate the Veda through their behavior, the *ṛṣis* actually tell the Vedas. When learning these Vedas, explained Kolhatkar-*buwā*, "a more subtle experience is possible—

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food after they are born, and as they depart they return to food" (*TU* 3.2.1). Varuna again tells him to do more *tapas*, since *tapas* is *brahman* ('*tapo brahmeti*'). Bhṛgu returns with the realization that "*prāṇa* is *brahman* ('*prāṇa brahmeti*')" (*TU* 3.3.1). There is a similar repetition through the other *kośas*, until finally Bhṛgu realizes that "*ānanda* is *brahman* ('*ānando brahmeti'*)" (*TU* 3.6.1). The Upaniṣad terms this 'Bhārgava knowledge' ('*bhārgavī vidyā*') (*TU* 3.6.1). Kolhatkar's exposition is more closely based on a medieval recast of this philosophical doctrine in the *Pañcadaśī* of Vidyāraṇya Swami, "said to have been the Head of the Śringeri Maṭh (one of the four principal Maṭhs established by Bhagavān Śankarācarya himself) from 1377 to 1386 A.D." (Vidyaranya Swami 1967, iii).

[112] Kolhatkar's reference to the 'cave' comes from the first verse of the *Pañcadaśī's* third chapter: "It is possible to understand that *brahman* which is hidden in the cave by differentiating the five *kośas*; therefore we will now discuss the five *kośas* [*guhāhitaṁ brahma yat tatpañcakośavivekataḥ* | *boddham śakyam tataḥ kośapañcakam pravivicyate*||]" (*Pañcadaśī* 3.1).

you begin to *see* the syllables. The experience of the syllables takes place somewhere inside" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000). Then, he asked the crucial question: "The 'inside' means what, exactly? The body and the self—are these the same thing? The organs of the body are not 'I'—they are different. *Avayavī* [bearer of organs] is different from *avayava* [organ]. He who calls the organs 'I' is an *avayavī*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000).[113] It is this question that drove the rest of his *pūrvaraṅga* on this day, the first in which he had given in to the pressures of his Marathi-speaking audience and switched the initiatory *abhaṅga* from a Sanskrit *śloka* to a Marathi verse of Tukārām: "*āmhī vaikuṇṭhavāsī* [We are dwellers of heaven]."

This "interiority" meant an interaction between two things: *saṁskārs* and the *antaḥkaraṇ*. Kolhatkar illustrated the relationship between these two through three anecdotal examples, all involving a complex interaction between performers, text, and audience. First:

> I am Vaman Kolhatkar, then I die, then I become a cow, then the owner begins to scratch me under my neck, and I'll enjoy it. But if someone did that to me, if someone came and because I'm a *buwā*, began to scratch me here, then what would I do? I'd smack them one across the face. [Looking menacingly at his accompanist,] Even if it were some *tabla* player, I wouldn't spare him! When my *antaḥkaraṇ* becomes a cow, my enjoyments change. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000)

Provoking laughter from the audience at the both at the *buwā*'s play-acting a cow, and the playful interaction between Kolhatkar and his *tabla* accompanist, Abhay Kulkarni, Kolhatkar's personal anecdotal example was then immediately followed by another:

> Our JAWA motorcycle, it sounds like a chariot. But once, I was struck in the foot by its *backstroke, and that will give me problems when I am 70. *Karma* has

[113] This explanation of the *ātman*—the true Self which lies under all five *kośas*—resembles the *Pañcadaśī's* distinction between *viṣaya* (object) and *viṣayī* (subject) (*Pañcadaśī* 3.27).

> accumulated there. The *saṁskārs* on our body [*deha*] accumulate, the *saṁskārs* on our mind [*man*] accumulate, the *saṁskārs* on our intellect [*buddhi*] accumulate. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000)[114]

In a third example, Kolhatkar further illustrated the effects of *saṁskārs* on the *antaḥkaraṇ* through direct interaction with a member of the audience, Suresh Kothari, an old family friend (of both Kolhatkar and myself) who is a mathematician at Iowa State University, and who had come to Pune for the winter holidays, bringing his college-age daughter along to see the *kīrtan*.

> One forgets that *piṭhala* tastes good.[115] But then when our friend Kothari returned after seven years, he said, "Mother, make *piṭhala* like back then. Don't you remember how it was on the day after my birthday? We had gone on a trip, I came late, I was in a hurry, with five, six of my friends…" Now he's come back from America and he might have eaten all sorts of things out there, but he wants his mother's *piṭhala*. This is *saṁskār*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000)

Kolhatkar used this localized, domestic example to illustrate his philosophical point, that external *saṁskārs* become attached to one's *antaḥkaraṇ* despite our outer condition. He then took these personal and worldly examples towards a deeper discourse, though again keeping the examples distinctively domestic:

> It's not that it disappears after death. It remains, but in a language more subtle than the language of *piṭhala*. The site where *saṁskārs* remain is called the *antaḥkaraṇ*. The thing on the inside that tells you to get up, to brush your teeth, to honor your mother, to fight with your uncle, and so on. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000)

Through the domestic and personal metaphors of mothers, *piṭhala*, and JAWA motorcycles, Kolhatkar's *pūrvaraṅga* creates a readily graspable image of interior world of the *antaḥkaraṇ* and the intrusion of external *saṁskārs*. During the next day's

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[114] In the last sentence of this example, Kolhatkar-*buwā* used repetition and harmonization of prose that is characteristic of *kīrtan*; the effect this time was not precisely the assertion of an authoritative voice, but a 'deepening' of the discourse, moving away from recounting personal history towards metaphysics.

[115] *Piṭhala* is a simple, typically Maharashtrian gravy made of chickpea flour (*besaṇ*), onions, and spices, to be eaten with rice or *bhākari* (millet bread).

pūrvaraṅga, that is, on the last day of the *kāmadhenu* legend (December 5), Kolhatkar then led his audience into the "cave" of the *antaḥkaraṇ*.

The Upaniṣadic system of the *pañcakośas* (literally, the five "coverings" or "layers") is ordinarily used to explain the complex relationship between bodies and *ātmans* (souls, "Selves"). Despite his audience's resistances to Sanskrit in the *pūrvaraṅga*, on this day Kolhatkar-*buwā* switched back to a Sanskrit verse (*Pañcadaśī* 3.2) in order to authoritatively explain the *kośas*:

> Pervading the body is the life-breath, pervading the life-breath, is the mind; and similarly, the agent, and similarly, the consumer—this chain is the cave.
> [*dehād abhyantaraḥ prāṇāḥ prāṇād abhyantaram manaḥ* |
> *tataḥ kartā tato bhoktā guhā seyam paramparā* ||] (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

This cave, explained Kolhatkar, has five *dālans*—(husks or sheaths): The *kośas* made of *anna* (food), *prāṇa* (breath), *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), and *ānanda* or *vijñāna* ("bliss" or "knowledge").[116] The basic principles behind the structure of these *kośas* are pervasion and encompassment. And so, for example, the *annamaya kośa* "swells and shrinks through eating food. It survives on food. Food is everything for it. This is the *annamaya kośa*. It grows and shrinks because of food—disease, illness, and whatever that happens is due to the force of food" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). But even after you reach the limits of this *kośa* in an individual, there is something leftover, because "the *prāṇamaya kośa* is what pervades and encompasses the *annamaya kośa*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).

[116] The names for the final two are flexible. The *buddhimaya kośa* is equivalent to the *kartṛ* of the verse, and signal the agentive or instrumental aspect of the Self; the *ānandamaya/vijñānamaya kośa* is the *bhoktṛ* of the verse, the experiential (and ultimately, "true") aspect of the Self. The realization of this *kośa*, the real Self, is the ultimate goal of Vedantic philosophy.

Kolhatkar then gave a number of everyday examples to demonstrate this relationship:

> If you drop a *ghoṅgaḍī* [a traditional, coarse wool blanket] into water, and then you hang it to dry, then where is the water? Inside or outside? If you ask this, then it's definitely inside, it's soaking in it. But if you put your hands close to the *ghoṅgaḍī*, then it feels cold. This means it pervades the *ghoṅgaḍī* and also is a little outside of it. Say if this is the *ghoṅgaḍī* [holding up his sweater]—this is not a *ghoṅgaḍī*, it's very nice. [Laughter] If you do this [moving his hand, very slowly, very close to the sweater], then it feels cold near it—be it a sweater or a *ghoṅgaḍī*. What is happening is that since the water is going outside of it, we notice it to the touch out here. Try it out. Perhaps you might wash sweaters like this one—wash them sometime! [laughter]. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

As he explained "What happens is that the water is a little outside of it, and what that is is the *prāṇamaya kośa*. It is *abhyantar*—nestled inside, it's inside and outside. It pervades the body and remains outside" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). This idea of simultaneous pervasion and encompassment extends to all five of the *kośas—annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *buddhimaya*, *ānandamaya*. Kolhatkar gave a folk illustration of this relationship between the *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya kośas* through a topic particularly favorite for *kīrtankārs*: food.[117] "If a man has eaten garlic," remarked Kolhatkar-*buwā*, "you have to go '*ihi, ihi*' when talking to him, if you're a person like me, who is not accustomed to eating garlic.[118] Does this mean I am inside his stomach? No. The smell of garlic is on his body" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).

In this way, though *prāṇa* is inside the body, we still notice them outside. The *manomaya* and *buddhimaya kośas* also work this way, but on the level of memories:

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[117]The *buwā* also provided the example of liquor, an equally popular topic in *kīrtan* though it is censured: "Our neighbor is a pilot. He had gone to Goa, and, a pilot's favorite subject is to tell stories, so he was telling me, he went to Goa, took some *pheṇī* (palm wine) and for two hours his entire body, and even near his body, there was the smell of *pheṇī*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).
[118] This is again an articulation of Brahman identity—Kolhatkar's strict adherence to *dharma* forbids him from eating onions and garlic, which are *rajas*-based, and hence non-Brahman foods.

> Even if I go to America, my mind is still on my home—what's happening? The milkman must have come, it's early morning, will my wife wake up on time? I would remember all of this. This behavior is of the *manomaya kośa*—memories. There are two conditions: having memories, in the *buddhimaya kośa*, and being struck by the memories in the *manomaya kośa*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

That is, the 'physical' appearance of memories takes place in the mind, the agentive faculty of the mind (*kartā*) while their evaluation is done by the intellect, the consumer (*bhoktā*). As he explained, it is a matter of "having memories versus having good or bad feelings about these memories—the feelings in it are *manas*, the *information is *buddhi*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). And so, in terms of physical space, the *manomaya kośa* of an individual may extend far in space and time, as far as his or her conscious memories extend, while the *buddhi*, the intellectual, decision-making faculties of the mind, may extend even further, into unrealized memories such as past lives. Though Kolhatkar did not extensively elaborate this point, the *ānandamaya kośa* is the reflection of the *ātman* experienced through deep sleep.[119] Through its Upaniṣadic identity with the *brahman*, the *ātman*, which lies at the heart of this *kośa*-cave, encompasses and pervades the entire cosmos.

We are thus presented with an ironic, non-dual picture of interiority in which the further inside the body you go, the more cosmic you get. Kolhatkar's introduction of *kośa* theory in the *pūrvaraṅga* constructs a worldview in which bodily existence is spatialized, in which the internal (and, simultaneously, the external) world of individual bodies is ordered according to these five *kośas*, and the interactions between them—most crucially

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[119] "Though it is in fact *ānandamaya* [made of bliss]," explains the *Pañcadaśī*, "it cannot be the *ātman*, on account of its being ephemeral; that *ānanda* of which it exists as a reflection is the *ātman* itself, eternal and immutable [*kādācitkatvāto anātmā syād ānandamayo 'py ayam | bimbabhūto ya ānanda ātmā 'sau sarvadā sthiteḥ ||*]" (*Pañcadaśī* 3.10).

the act of eating—takes place on the level of each *kośa*. Thus, "whatever we consume also has *kośas*. These *kośas* affect our *kośas*. He who eats this sort of food [gesturing liquor], meaning drink, his mind becomes deluded. He becomes cowardly. It is well known. A great deal of research has been done on this" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). By giving his audience practical analogies of these metaphysics, Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s *kīrtan* provided a "folk Advaita" lens through which he wanted the Nārad Mandir audience to read the Viśvāmitra legends.

If individuals in the world are ordered by these *kośa*-spaces, then spirituality (*adhyātma*)—the ultimate goal for most of the *kīrtan* audience—involves the purification of these spaces, in order to attain *viveka*, a state of discerning wisdom.[120] This purification then is the essence of *ṛṣi*-hood, and the function of *tapas*.[121] And so,

> An effort made for our experiences not to remain entangled in error becomes complete through *tapascaryā*, through the vow of purifying the *kośas*. How? Eating, drinking, getting up, sitting down, the nature of our thinking, bathing, modes of sitting, getting up, greeting people. What relationships to keep with people? So by solitude, relationships automatically stop. They become *intact. A person engaged in *tapas* becomes distant, and many things automatically stop. Other things he must make stop through vows: As a result, one by one he purifies his *kośas*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

Viśvāmitra's march towards *brahmarṣi*-hood, from this perspective, is less a traversal of social boundaries as much as a spiritual march towards *kośa*-control; in this manner, the *kīrtan*'s juxtaposition of *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga* homologized Viśvāmitra's

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[120] For his Narad Mandir audience, Kolhatkar updated the standard Vedanta examples of *viveka*: "The standard example is: *vyāgrho vā puṁso vā* [Is it a tiger or is it a man?]. Walking around in the yard at night, you see someone in the yard. Nowadays, you cannot give this example because a person living in a flat has no yard and no pillars. How can I give this example? So nowadays, if you open the door and see something moving you think it's someone lying hidden. They show this on TV, that crooks hide in *wardrobes. Because of changing times, your *imaginations must also change" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).
[121] Note the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad's* use of the term *tapas* to describe Bhṛgu's repeated contemplation on the nature of the *kośas* (*TU* 3.1-6).

boundary-crossing into the contemporary religious domain. Kolhatkar in fact made this homology explicit in his presentation:

> It is a struggle with oneself. We always look at the outside world, we must learn to look at the inside world. Then I am able to understand my *kośas*. And as [Viśvāmitra] is examining his *kośas*, when he becomes caught up with the outside world, then his *tapascaryā* becomes broken. Then he runs after Menakā, he gets caught up with Triśaṅku, and so on; many, many such changes are demonstrated in Viśvāmitra's life. We want to slowly understand this story—how does the purification of the five *kośas* happen through *tapascaryā*? (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000)

Importantly, for Kolhatkar this introspective notion of *tapas* belongs to the sphere of (Sanskrit) *dharma*, not (Marathi) *bhakti*: "We find that this path is only in the *dharma* texts. I'm not saying that its just in the Vedic texts—even in other *dharmas*, these methods are described, *tapascaryās* are described" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).

Unlike most *kīrtankārs*, Kolhatkar actively uses Sanskrit literature and theory in his *kīrtans*, actively seeking what he feels are the "original" (*mūḷ*) sources; at the same time he is aware of the incomprehensibility of his interpretation for the ordinary, *bhakti*-soaked audience of Nārad Mandir. He is a *kīrtankār*, who, unlike many others, consistently seeks to challenge the religious assumptions of his audience. But this challenge comes within the generic expectations of *kīrtan*: Kolhatkar's *pūrvaraṅga* discourses are also domesticized, localized, and contemporized, offering more readily understandable versions of these esoteric Sanskrit doctrines. To my knowledge, few *kīrtankārs* have ever discussed the relevance of the five *kośas* to the *kāmadhenu* legend's structure, and Kolhatkar-*buwā* clearly could have presented a *kīrtan* such as Panta Pratinidhi's, focusing on *varṇa*. However, his translation of this legend into the spiritual

world allowed him to do two things. First, his *kīrtan* managed to transcend the worldly politics of caste, avoiding simple, pithy connections between ancient legends and contemporary society.[122] More importantly, his representation of bodies and *ātmans* as interpenetrated *kośa*-spaces—as *ghoṅgaḍīs* needing a good cleaning, so to speak—allowed him to use an otherwise obscure and irrelevant set of stories about a Vedic *ṛṣi* who behaved abnormally and changed his *varṇa* for a much more immediate purpose: the deconstruction of the boundary between *dharma* and *bhakti*.

Through the Satyavatī legend, Kolhatkar-*buwā* first mapped the notions of *dharma* and *bhakti* onto an essential, irreconcilable difference between the (Sanskrit) *ṛṣi* and the (Marathi) *sant*. The *kāmadhenu* legend allowed him to traverse this boundary, using a Viśvāmitra-centered focalization on *tapas*. By describing *tapas* as *kośa* purification, as a march towards understanding the cosmic *ātman* hidden (in a 'cave') inside these pervading-and-encompassing *kośas*, Kolhatkar presented Viśvāmitra's quest towards *brahmarṣi*-hood to his contemporary *kīrtan* audience as a quest towards spiritual liberation. As a result, rather than complete opposition, the difference between *sant* and *ṛṣi* became now simply a matter of degree: "Those who we call *ṛṣis*, are a bit more *refined than each of the *sants*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 4, 2000); that is, they are working on purifying different *kośas*. Kolhatkar's final message then became a *double entendre*: "You will all become *brahmarṣis* after doing *tapas* and purifying the five *kośas*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).

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[122] In fact, while reading a draft of this dissertation, he expressed great surprise that Western scholars are so interested "in this business of caste" (Kolhatkar, personal communication, December 26, 2003).

IV. Conclusions

Like epic and purāṇic tellings, Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s *kīrtan* supplemented the *kāmadhenu* legend with other, related *ākhyāns*, and this motif-based intertextuality has been the primary point of analysis of this chapter. Our examination of the contemporary performance of the *kāmadhenu* legend in *kīrtan* has exposed the roles of the performer and audience in determining precisely which legends are supplemented, allowing us to see the extent to which they are agents in the production of narrative. The performance of a text therefore is an intrinsically intertextual endeavor—whether it is in the literary space of the epics or *purāṇas*, or in the oral world of *nāradīya kīrtan*. Examining oral performance allows us two insights: how resonance of motifs determines the success or failure of supplementation, and how supplementation allows interdiscursivity—the dialogic engagement between two distinct modes of thought, what I have called the homology between the *pūrvaraṅga* and *uttararaṅga*. In Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s *kāmadhenu* legend, this homology was also given narrative supplementation: an embedding of the legend of Dhruva.[123] Kolhatkar told it to explicitly 'translate' *tapas* into *bhakti* in the *kāmadhenu* legend, but it is a legend that is more explicitly parallel with the central focus of the next chapter—the legend of Triśaṅku.

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[123] This is the story of the boy prince who decided to perform *tapas* in devotion to Viṣṇu, with the desire that "I want to do something so that no one will ever tell me, 'Get up!'" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000). The sage Nārada instructed him to do *bhakti*—"'hold Visnu in your mind,' said Nārada, and then he left"—and we shall see in the next chapter that Kolhatkar reinterpreted this *bhakti* as *tapas*, and indeed, the same sort of *tapas* as Viśvāmitra.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNTOUCHABLES, DOGMEAT, AND THE GATES OF HEAVEN: TRANSLATING THE LEGENDS OF SATYAVRATA TRIŚAṄKU

The previous two chapters have argued that the epic and purāṇic Viśvāmitra legends ought to be thought of as textual performances—as cultural acts that transform the world around them, rather than inert vehicles of ideology. These legends construct narrative maps: the projections of realworld *varṇas* onto storyworld domestic spaces. By narrating the accounts of extraordinary characters like Viśvāmitra as they traverse the boundaries of these *varṇa*/domestic spaces, epics and *purāṇas* raise questions about *varṇa* that are difficult if not impossible to answer through ordinary śāstraic discourse. It is through supplementary narratives that each text either comes to terms with his self-transformation, or reseals the broken boundaries. In the next two chapters, we turn to the 'performativity' of epic and purāṇic narratives—that is, the realworld effects of these narrative maps.[1] We will investigate more closely the structuralist notion of 'homology' not simply as a natural condition or system (Lévi-Strauss 1967), but as a discursive correspondance between ancient narrative events and contemporary lived reality that is produced during an act of performance. This chapter will investigate a particular kind of homology I call 'translation,' in which, akin to the one-to-one linguistic translation of words and sentences, ancient legends are projected into contemporary discourses. The

[1] In this chapter, I distinguish the notion of "performance" (what Richard Bauman terms an event of "verbal art") from the concept of the 'performative' developed primarily through the work of J. L. Austin, who distinguished the performative utterance, which brings into being the action it describes, from the constantive utterance, which simply describes a state of affairs (Austin 1975, Bauman 1976).

next chapter will examine an opposite sort of homology ('immersion') in which contemporary discourses are thrust into ancient storyworlds and performers and audiences are forced to make 'leaps of faith.'

In this chapter, we examine the story of how Viśvāmitra first restored the Kṣatriya-turned-Caṇḍāla Triśaṅku to his throne and then sent him bodily into heaven, as well as the śāstraic questions it raises through projecting *varṇa* onto bodies instead of spaces. Two distinct narrative traditions speak of this story in epic and purāṇic sources: the 'historic' legend of Satyavrata, found in the *purāṇas*, and its complementary, 'mythic' legend of Triśaṅku found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The variation between them, I argue, reveals an intergeneric dialogue between the epics and the *purāṇas* on the meaning of this extraordinary event, and becomes most dramatically represented in the medieval *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*. The *Devībhāgavata* chronologically synthesizes both legends in an effort to tell a coherent, linearly-ordered account of the ancient past, interjecting a third, independent story of Viśvāmitra's eating dogmeat during famine—the Śvapaca legend. I will show that this medieval composition homologizes the (ancient) notion of *tapas* and the then-new notion of *devī-bhakti* (Goddess devotion). Finally, to understand how this act of textual performance produces a homology of translation, I will study how Vaman V. Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* version 'tied together' the historical loose ends of textual tradition to organize his performed narratives—and his religious teachings—as modern reconstructions of an ancient Vedic tradition.

I. The fall and rise of Triśaṅku in the Rāmāyaṇa (Rām 1.56-1.59, SkandaP 6.4-8)

The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* is traditionally designated as the *ādikāvya* (*ur*-poem) (Goldman 1984, 16, Brockington 1998 ,1), and its representation of Rāma as 'God/king' arguably results in a poetics of socio-political power (Pollock 1984, 527). Furthermore, the widely accepted lateness of the first book's composition means that it must presuppose the primary narrative of the epic.[2] I will show that the Viśvāmitra narratives, which take up such a large portion of the *Bālakaṇḍa*, appear largely to enhance the epic's *vīra* and *adbhuta rasas* (the sentiments of valor and wonder), connecting the force of Viśvāmitra's *tapas* to Rāma's human/divine achievement through the literary device of his *astras* (magic weapons).[3] As Viśvāmitra curses the Vāsiṣṭhas, forcibly sends Triśaṅku into heaven, and manufactures a 'counter-creation' (*pratisṛṣṭi*), the Triśaṅku legend's valorization of the sage's *tapas* and human will generates heroic and astonishing sentiments homological to those emerging from Rāma's impossible achievements. This legend is in many ways the centerpiece of the *Bālakāṇḍa's* Viśvāmitra cycle, composed perhaps in the second to fourth centuries, C.E.[4] Much later, perhaps as late as the seventeenth century, the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* retells the *Bālakāṇḍa*

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[2] For debates about dating the *Bālakāṇḍa*, see Brockington 1998, 379-383, Goldman 1984, 60-81.

[3] In doing so, I question Sheldon Pollock's rejection of Rāma's purely human heroism in the epic. While this may be the case for the larger epic narrative, I suggest that the Viśvāmitra legends in general, and the Triśaṅku episode in particular, indeed offer "a celebration of human potentiality, a paean to man's endurance and triumph over superhuman adversity in an almost Sophoclean mode" (Pollock 1984, 510). Through the subnarratives, the epic provides important moments of the counter-normative triumph of human will, but encased within the larger narrative's normativizing religious and political discourse.

[4] While John Brockington assigns the composition of the *Bālakāṇḍa* to the first or second century, C.E. (Brockington 1984, 312), Goldman suggests a more gradual development, and notes that the Viśvāmitra legends, due to the references to Śakas and Yavanas in the *kāmadhenu* legend, could not be earlier than the late first century, C.E. (Goldman 1984, 63). Kirfel notes, as I will also note, the *Bālakāṇḍa's* awareness of the early *purāṇas* (Kirfel 1947, cited in Brockington 1998, 382-383).

version, replacing the epic's interest in *tapas* with a purānic concern over describing a *tīrtha* where Triśaṅku "bathed and regained the proper body of a king" (*SkandaP* 6.2.3).[5]

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the story comes as Śatānanda, preceptor to king Janaka of Videha, continues the '*ṛṣi*-ography' of Viśvāmitra and his quest for Brahman power. After Viśvāmitra's severe and lengthy *tapas*, the god Brahmā bestowed upon him the title of *rājarṣi*, a *ṛṣi* (sage) of Kṣatriya status. However, Viśvāmitra insisted upon being regarded as a *brahmarṣi* (a Brahman-sage) and resumed his asceticism (*Rām* 1.56.1-9).[6] "Meanwhile," explains Śatānanda, "there lived the infamous [*vikhyāta*] Triśaṅku, truth-speaking and of controlled senses, a descendant in the Ikṣvāku dynasty" (*Rām* 1.56.10).

Triśaṅku was once inspired to conduct a sacrifice so that he might go to heaven in his own body (*Rām* 1.56.10-11). He summoned Vasiṣṭha and told him his plans. "Impossible! [*aśakyam*]" said Vasiṣṭha (*Rām* 1.56.12).[7] Rejected by his *guru*, the king then humbly asked Vasiṣṭha's one hundred sons, who were engaged in *tapas* (*Rām* 1.56.13-20), but they also spurned him (*Rām* 1.57.1-5).[8] Undeterred, Triśaṅku threatened

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[5] According to Ludo Rocher, "the language of the text shows influence of Gujarati; on the basis of archeological evidence it has been dated in the seventeenth century" (Rocher 1986, 234). R. C. Hazra has dated portions of the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa*, the chapter of the voluminous *Skanda Purāṇa* in which this narrative is found, to earlier than the thirteenth century (Hazra 1975, 165), due to citations in Hemādri's *Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi*; however, these passages are not related to the Triśaṅku text. I thank Hans T. Bakker for this reference (Bakker, personal communication, June 10, 2004).

[6] As discussed earlier, in the *Rāmāyaṇa's* presentation of the Viśvāmitra cycle, Viśvāmitra undergoes a progressive transformation from Kṣatriya to *rājarṣi* to simply *ṛṣi*, then to *maharṣi* (great *ṛṣi*), and finally to *brahmarṣi*. It comes as no surprise that David Gordon White's dichotomy of Viśvāmitra as "*rājarṣi*" and Vasiṣṭha as "*brahmarṣi*" (White 1991, White 1992) is most applicable to the Triśaṅku legend as well as the related Śvapaca narrative that forms the focus of White's essay, since these occur when Viśvāmitra is at the *rājarṣi* stage of the *Rāmāyaṇa* progression.

[7] Vasiṣṭha's reasons for the refusal are made more specific in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: "There is no such rite by which you may go to heaven with this body, King—I am telling you the truth. The sacrifices that were first described by self-born Brahmā—the *agniṣṭoma* and so forth—only by conducting these may one attain heaven, King, and that too, in a different body" (*SkandaP* 6.2.14-15). In response, Triśaṅku angrily questions "the power of a Brahman's *tapas*" (*SkandaP* 6.2.20).

[8] "You idiot!" declare the Vāsiṣṭhas, "You've been turned away by our truth-speaking *guru*; how dare you supercede him and reach for another branch? The family priest has always been the highest recourse of all

to “go along another path”(*Rām* 1.57.7c). Realizing the implications of his statement,[9] the sons of Vasiṣṭha cursed him to become a Caṇḍāla (*Rām* 1.57.8-9).[10] As his ministers and citizenry abandoned him seeing his outcaste condition (*Rām* 1.57.10), the king went to seek the help of Viśvāmitra, who received him with great pity (*Rām* 1.57.11-12).

Bemoaning his condition, Triśaṅku pleaded to Viśvāmitra, “Help me overcome the power of fate [*daiva*] through human actions [*puruṣakāra*]” (*Rām* 1.57.23). Viśvāmitra assured him: “In this very form imposed upon you due to your *guru's* curse, you will enter heaven” (*Rām* 1.58.4).[11] The sage then made preparations for the sacrifice,

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the Ikṣvākus. It is impossible to circumvent the words of that truth speaker. Lord Vasiṣṭha the *ṛṣi* has claimed that it is impossible, so how could we possibly perform this sacrifice? You, friend, are an imbecile! Now go back to your city, King” (*Rām* 1.57.2). The commentators Govindarāja and Śivasahāya take “another branch” (*śākhāntara*) to mean “another recourse” (*Rām GPP* 1.58.2, p. 327).

[9] The commentators Govindarāja and Nageśa Bhaṭṭa remark that his words were “filled with dread [*vākyam ghora-abhisaṁyuktam*]” because of the implication that Triśaṅku will supercede the authority of his family priest (*Rām GPP* 1.58.8, p. 327-328).

[10] The epic's descriptions of his transformation offer a glimpse into the ancient understanding of the outward signs of low social status: “Now, as the night passed, the king turned into a Caṇḍāla, wearing black clothes, black and coarse, with wild, unkempt hair; he wore garlands and ointments from the funeral grounds, and his ornaments were make of iron” (*Rām* 1.57.9). The *Skanda Purāṇa's* depictions are far more elaborate: “As soon as they said this, the king immediately assumed the form of an outcaste, bearing a body of disfigured appearance. He had a thin waist, a lean neck, yellow eyes, a crooked nose, and a black body; he was spike-eared and covered in a foul odor. The king, seeing that he had been mutated into Caṇḍāla nature, at once stood still and hung his head in shame. Again and again, he was censured by the sages, who cried, ‘Go! Go!’ and was harassed from all sides by unrestrained dogs. He had covered himself in tattered clothes and so appeared like a crow in the midst of sparrows” (*SkandaP* 6.3.8-11). Notice the primary bodily transformations of the *Skanda* telling (waist, neck, nose, skin color) in contrast to the *Rāmāyaṇa's* secondary transformations (clothes, hairstyle, ornaments)—these narrative changes indicate changing notions of Caṇḍālahood. For an explication of the symbolic significance of the crow and sparrow motif in the narrativization of untouchability, see Dundes 1997.

[11] The *Skanda Purāṇa* is unable to tolerate even the possibility of a polluted Caṇḍāla entering heaven, and uses this moment again to extol the power of *tīrthas*. Though Viśvāmitra agrees to sacrifice for Triśāṅku, it is only after he completes a *tīrtha*-pilgrimage in order to purify himself for the sacrifice, for “there is no pollution that may not be eliminated through bathing at a *tīrtha*” (*SkandaP* 6.4.35). However, despite taking Triśaṅku to every known *tīrtha* in the whole world (*SkandaP* 6.4.47), he cannot be purified, and Viśvāmitra, unable to keep his promise, contemplates suicide to avoid ridicule from Vasiṣṭha's sons. Just then, on the summit of Mount Arbuda (Mount Abu), Viśvāmitra encounters the sage Mārkaṇḍeya, who directs them towards a *tīrtha* in Hāṭakeśvara (in contemporary Gujarat) where “the waters of the nether-Jāhnavī are found…[and which] emerged from the netherworld when Śaṁbhu [Śiva] raised up the *liṅga*” (*SkandaP* 6.4.54). Following Mārkaṇḍeya's advice, Triśaṅku is cleansed at this *tīrtha*.

and instructed his students to invite all the foremost *ṛṣis* and their students (*Rām* 1.58.6-9). In due course, his disciples then reported back to the sage:

> Hearing your words, all the twice-born are coming, from every region, that is, apart from Mahodaya.[12] Listen to what the one hundred sons of Vasiṣṭha said, great Sage, every syllable is brimming with spite: "With a Kṣatriya as the sacrificer, and moreover on behalf of a Caṇḍāla, how could the gods and *ṛṣis* possibly accept the offerings in the sacrifical fire? And how might the exalted Brahmans who partake in the food offered by a Caṇḍāla go to heaven? Protected by Viśvāmitra?" (*Rām* 1.58.12-15)

Hearing this sarcastic slander, Viśvāmitra was furious, and cursed the sons of Vasiṣṭha to be outcastes.[13] Viśvāmitra then proclaimed to the other sages who had come, "This is the heir to the Ikṣvāku dynasty, the illustrious Triśaṅku, pious and giving. He has come to me seeking assistance, with a desire to enter into heaven in his own body. So let us perform a sacrifice" (*Rām* 1.59.2-3). The sages then conferred with one another, and agreed to perform the sacrifice, fearing Viśvāmitra's power (*Rām* 1.59.4-7).

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[12] The use of "Mahodaya" here is unclear. The commentators take Mahodaya to be a different *ṛṣi*, as Goldman has noted (Goldman 1984, 377), and scholarly interpretations have alternatively considered Mahodaya to be Vasiṣṭha himself or one of his sons. Interestingly, V. S. Agrawala has argued that Mahodaya in the *Vāmana Purāṇa* seems to indicate the capital city of Kāṇyakubja (modern-day Kannauj), Viśvāmitra's old kingdom (Agrawala 1964); this identity is reinforced in the *Bālakaṇḍa* not much earlier, as Viśvāmitra's grandfather Kuśanābha is said to have built the city of Mahodaya (*Rām* 1.31.4cd).

[13] Again, the specific wording of his curse is significant: "Those who dare slander me, though I am not at all wicked, but rather engaged in severe austerities, those wicked souls will undoubtedly be reduced to ashes. For today the fetters of destiny [*kālapāśa*] have led them into the house of Death [*vaivasvata-kṣayam*]. Let them become keepers of the dead, for seven hundred generations, named Muṣṭikas, contemptible eaters of dog flesh, decrepit and disfigured; let them be bound in servitude to the world. And as for that ignobile Mahodaya, who dares slander me, who am uncensurable, he will become a Niśāda, reviled in all the worlds" (*Rām* 1.58.18-21). Here, Govindarāja remarks: "Some may claim that even though a Kṣatriya may have performed severe austerities, it is at all times unlawful to have a sacrifice for a Caṇḍāla; and so why is a curse placed upon those who are only speaking the truth? The answer is that this is the fruit of the *tapas* of Viśvāmitra, who is seeking a forcible revenge against Vasiṣṭha" (*Rām GPP* 1.59.21-22, p. 333) Nageśa Bhaṭṭa echoes this normativizing sentiment, suggesting: "this is all brought about by divine fate for the destruction of [Visvamitra's] increasing *tapas*, due to his desire to become a Brahman" (*Rām GPP* 1.59.22, p. 333).

As the ritual wore on, Viśvāmitra summoned the gods to rake their rightful portions of the offering, but none came (*Rām* 1.59.10-11).[14] In anger, Viśvāmitra then raised up a sacrificial ladle and said to Triśaṅku, "King, behold the power of my asceticism that I myself have earned! With my might [*ojas*], I will myself lead you up to heaven in your own body. Go, king, to that heaven that is so difficult to reach in your own body" (*Rām* 1.59.12-13).[15] The king's body rose up to heaven, as the sages watched (*Rām* 1.59.15). Seeing the untouchable king, Indra threw him back down, declaring: "Trisaṅku, go back! You are not to make heaven your home. You have fallen because of a *guru's* curse, fool! Fall headfirst back to earth!" (*Rām* 1.59.17).

As he fell from heaven, Triśaṅku cried out to Viśvāmitra, who exclaimed: "Stop! Stop!" (*Rām* 1.59.18-19). Viśvāmitra then created a new *saptarṣi* constellation, as well as entirely new sets of stars, constellations, and planets in the south (*Rām* 1.59.20-21).[16] Out of rage, he even started creating new deities, declaring: "I will create another Indra, otherwise may this world be without an Indra" (*Rām* 1.59.22). Though the gods tried to console the sage, and to explain that the king is ineligible to enter bodily into heaven (*Rām* 1.59.23-25), Viśvāmitra insisted that he had made a promise to Triśaṅku that must

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[14] In the *Skanda*, the normative rejection of Viśvāmitra's sacrifice is made more explicitly. The god Brahmā himself reminds Viśvāmitra, "Heaven cannot be reached in one's own body through a sacrificial act. Only through releasing your body can this be done" (*SkandaP* 6.4.69). Viśvāmitra's elaborate, twelve-year sacrifice proves unsuccessful, and even Triśaṅku gives up his ambition to enter bodily into heaven.

[15] In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, he explains: "Just as I had earned my Brahmanhood through coercion, I will assuredly make a new creation myself" (*SkandaP* 6.6.5). Then, rather than using his *tapas,* the *Skanda* maintains that Viśvāmitra propitiates Śiva and receives the powers of creation through a boon—a motif related perhaps to his acquisition of *astras* in the *Rāmāyaṇa's kāmadhenu* legend.

[16] The *Skanda Purāṇa* depicts Viśvāmitra's creation as a complete reduplication of the ordinary world, particularly its celestial phenomena—the sun, the moon, planets, constellations and stars—which "all began to compete with one another in the sky, and, appearing double in number, they instilled unease among the people" (*SkandaP* 6.7.6). The question of where these doubles of the sun, the moon, and the stars go afterwards is left unanswered in the *Skanda*—the *Rāmāyaṇa's* explanation is that they are relegated to the southern hemisphere, in which direction a 'tremendous obstacle' arises for Viśvāmitra's *tapas*, and he is forced to move towards the west, into the Puṣkaras (*Rām* 1.60.2-4).

not prove false (*Rām* 1.59.26), and suggested: "Let Triśaṅku remain forever in this heaven that I have created, and let these constellations and stars last forever as well. As long as the worlds last, let all that I have created endure" (*Rām* 1.59.27-28). The gods replied, "Let this happen. Let all of this remain in the sky, all of them, but outside of the circuit of the sun. And among those lights, let Triśaṅku remain, burning brightly turned upside down, appearing as if immortal" (*Rām* 1.59.30-31). Viśvāmitra agreed, and the sacrifice drew to a close (*Rām* 1.59.32-33).

Through its remarkable depictions of Viśvāmitra's compassionate defense of Triśaṅku, and his fiery challenges to Vasiṣṭha and his sons, to the normative sacrificial community, and even to the gods, *Rāmāyaṇa's* Triśaṅku legend's focalization is on the extraordinary powers of this sage, supplementing the representation in the *kāmadhenu* legend. Like the *Mahābhārata's* Kalmāṣapāda sequel (*Mbh* 1.166-169), the Triśaṅku legend describes the movements of a king across *varṇa*/domestic boundaries, as his body transforms due to a Brahman's curse. The binary *varṇa* opposition, now appearing between the Kṣatriya Triśaṅku and his Brahman *guru*/*purohita* Vasiṣṭha,[17] is mapped onto Triśaṅku's palace and the Vāsiṣṭhas' *āśrama*, where the sons of Vasiṣṭha unleash their curse (*Rām* 1.57.8). Just as the Kalmāṣapāda narrative refocalized the *Ādi Parvan's* *kāmadhenu* legend, the Triśaṅku legend relocates the site of *varṇa* conflict from the symbolic *kāmadhenu* to the physical body of the king, whose desire to enter heaven

[17] The sons of Vasiṣṭha clarify that "The family priest has always been the highest recourse of all the Ikṣvākus. It is impossible to circumvent the words of that truth speaker" (*Rām* 1.57.3). The spiritual (Upaniṣadic) notion of *guru* is not identical to the ritual/sacerdotal *purohita* (family priest), and I suggest that the juxtaposition of the two terms in the person of Vasiṣṭha is a mapping of a hierarchical relationship (*guru-śiṣya*) onto an intrinsically domestic one (*purohita*-king).

"with his body" (*saśarīreṇa*) triggers the entire series of events.[18] Also as in the Kalmāṣapāda legend, these events bring about the destruction of Vasiṣṭha's one hundred sons.

The difference between these two legends emerges from their treatment of the polluted body. The *Mahābhārata* normatively restores Kalmāṣapāda's Kṣatriyahood, while the *Rāmāyaṇa* forcibly thrusts Triśaṅku into heaven, polluted body and all. In doing so, the latter epic sets up a storyworld conflict between the ideal of *varṇa* and the force of Viśvāmitra's *tapas*.[19] While *tapas* allows Triśaṅku to rise to heaven, it is a new heaven that Viśvāmitra builds around him, marginalized to fall "outside the circuit of the sun" (*Rām* 1.59.30). The storyworld fate of Triśaṅku's body therefore mimics the realworld marginalization of the Caṇḍāla, a social group (*jāti*), polluted and falling outside of the śāstraic *varṇa* system.[20] While the *Rāmāyaṇa* does not actively contest the polluted and marginalized status of the Caṇḍāla, it tells a story in which he is able to succeed despite his Caṇḍālahood, through the grandeur of *tapas*. Triśaṅku enters heaven, as well as conducts a Vedic sacrifice, and the commentators are clearly uncomfortable with this latter event. The *Rāmāyaṇa* describes Triśaṅku as having the "manifest form of a Caṇḍāla [*sākṣāt caṇḍālarūpiṇam*]" (*Rām* 1.58.1d), and the commentators read this phrase to indicate that Triśaṅku, cursed to his condition, is not the same as a Caṇḍāla by

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[18] In the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, Janamejaya explicitly poses the question: "How was Triśaṅku then liberated, since he now had a Caṇḍāla body?" (*DBhP* 7.13.1). This motif resonates with Viśvāmitra's desire to enter Brahmanhood 'with his body,' no doubt the source of the sage's compassion towards the king.
[19] And, in fact, the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling of this legend actively attacks the normative position. The sons of Vasiṣṭha who question the validity of the sacrifice are cursed, the other sages are bullied into participating in the sacrifice, and, defying even the will of the gods, Viśvāmitra threatens to create another Indra.
[20] The *śāstras* come to terms with the Caṇḍāla, the Śvapaca, the Muṣṭika, and other such categories by genealogizing them as results of *varṇa-saṅkara*—the intermixtures of *varṇa*. For example, the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* classifies the Caṇḍāla as the result of a *pratiloma* ('against-the-grain') union of a Śudra male and Brahman female (*Mānava-dharmaśāstra* 10.15, see Olivelle 2004, 181).

birth, but that his body only bears the "marks of a Caṇḍāla [*cāṇḍālacihna*]": black clothes and skin, wild, unkempt hair, funeral garlands and iron jewelry (*Rām* 1.57.9).[21] Śivasahāya stresses that "the adjective [*viśeṣaṇam*] 'form of a Caṇḍāla' [*cāṇḍāla-rūpiṇam iti*] is used" (*Rām GPP* 1.60.1, p. 333), and not simply a noun (i.e., *cāṇḍāla*), meaning that he may look and act like one, but is not essentially a Caṇḍāla.[22]

For the *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators, the social structure underlying this narrative is therefore a bit more complex than a Dumontian opposition between the absolutely pure Brahman (Vasiṣṭha) with his symbolic cow, and the absolutely impure Caṇḍāla (Triśaṅku) with his symbolic dog (White 1992).[23] Offering a 'deconstruction' of Triśaṅku's transformed body by distinguishing its condition from 'natural' Caṇḍālahood, the commentators offer semantic solutions: either Triśaṅku is not literally a Caṇḍāla, but appears like one, or he is a pseudo-Caṇḍāla, whose status is the result of actions (not birth), and so there is no violation of śāstraic laws in his going to heaven or in his performing a sacrifice. Furthermore, states Govindarāja, Viśvāmitra's sacrifice is successful only because it "is magnified by the grandeur of his *tapas*" (*Rām GPP* 1.58.4),

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[21] Govindarāja notes two significant details. First, since Viśvāmitra feels compassion towards the king, it indicates that Triśaṅku is a Caṇḍāla by behavior (*varṇa*) not by birth (*jāti*): "while there might be an aversion from sympathy towards those who are Caṇḍāla by birth ('jāti-Caṇḍāla'), it is not the case towards those who have become Caṇḍālas due to actions ('karma-Caṇḍāla')" (*Rām GPP* 1.60.1, p. 333). Second, since he is of a Caṇḍāla form 'before the eyes' (*sākṣāt*), this indicates that his Caṇḍālahood is due to his bearing the marks of a Caṇḍāla ('*caṇḍālacihna*', not due to a Caṇḍāla existence ('*caṇḍālabhāva*') that is derivable from the *śāstras* ('*śāstragamya*')" (*Rām GPP* 1.60.1, p. 333). It is clear that Govindarāja wants to make a distinction between ideological status (a result of behavior), and realworld status that results from birth (*jāti*).

[22] Śivasahāya's position is not uncontested, as Govindarāja declares: "The fact that he became a Caṇḍāla does not mean that he merely resembled a Caṇḍāla, but in fact that losing his status of being a Kṣatriya, he obtained the *jāti* of Caṇḍālahood. Due to the fact that castes such as Brahmans and so forth are rooted in one's *karma*, when one is lost, it is on account of the loss of the other, and so it is described here" (*Rām GPP* 1.58.9)"

[23] In White's analysis, Viśvāmitra, as a *rājarṣi* stands 'betwixt and between' these two poles as a Lévi-Straussian mediating principle, freely associating with both and representing a historical resolution to the binary.

and so it is not through *puruṣakāra* alone, nor even Vedic ritual, that Viśvāmitra is able to elevate Triśaṅku into heaven. It is through the discharge of his accumulated *tapas*.[24]

As we noticed before, the *Skanda Purāṇa's* telling, composed not long after the *Rāmāyaṇa's* commentators, disallows this 'pseudo-Caṇḍāla' designation, seeing Triśaṅku's transformation as a wholly real body change. Immediately following his transformation, Triśaṅku becomes ashamed of his body, and sadly realizes that his Kṣatriya way of life is no longer possible. He laments the fact that he may not live with his family, that seeing his condition, his enemies will grow fearless, and that his allies will lose their devotion. He further laments that his elephants, horses, troops, treasury, grain, cows, goats and sheep will all grow uncontrollable due to his Caṇḍāla status. These are the physical signifiers of kingship, and by tying their loss explicitly to Triśaṅku's Caṇḍāla body, the *Skanda Purāṇa* approaches *varṇa* as a material phenomenon. It is entirely impossible for a Caṇḍāla to live in royal domestic space, and Triśaṅku is forced to move to the outskirts of town, at "the gates of his own city" (*SkandaP* 6.3.25-26).

This interpretive difference between the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*tīrtha*-centered rather than *tapas*-centered) leads to a different resolution of the narrative, and a different type of 'spilling over.' The *Skanda's* story of Triśaṅku does not end with simply his going to heaven. The fact that Triśaṅku used the geographical site of the Hāṭakeśvara *tīrtha* to ascend to heaven creates a religious solution to the narrative, but also a problem, since this *tīrtha* now grants any creature who dies there immediate and

[24] In fact, Nageśa Bhaṭṭa reads the whole series of counter-normative events as a type of divine conspiracy to rid Viśvāmitra of his growing ascetic power: "Though here we find the occurrence of a Kṣatriya sacrificer, and moreover a sacrificer for a Caṇḍāla polluted by a curse, and at the same time that Brahmans, that is, the Vāsiṣṭhas, are suppressed through actions such as injury, and so forth, it is to be understood that this is all brought about by divine fate for the destruction of [Viśvāmitra's] increasing *tapas*, due to his desire to become a Brahman" (*Rām GPP* 1.59.22).

free entry into heaven (*SkandaP* 6.8.6). According to the *Skanda*, this *tīrtha* then became a rather popular site.

> While people were happily going to heaven by the power of this *tīrtha*, all the rituals like the *agniṣṭoma* and so forth fell apart. No mortal sacrificed, no men took vows. No one gave gifts, no one devoted themselves to (other) *tīrthas*—they only went to the split-*liṅga* and bathed. Then, seated on lovely aircraft, they went to heaven. (*SkandaP* 6.8.11-14)

The decay of Vedic sacrifices and the overcrowding in heaven—"everywhere filled with people fighting one another with their arms raised in the air" (*SkandaP* 6.8.17)—force the gods to call for the *tīrtha's* destruction. Vāyu, god of wind, blows dust upon the *liṅga*, forming a giant *nāga* (serpent) burrow.[25] Through this scene, the *Skanda* presents the massive, anti-*varṇa* power of this *tīrtha* but disallows its realworld usage by irretrievably sealing it from human consumption—in other words, its Triśaṅku narrative successfully voices a counter-normative questioning of *varṇa*, but its textual performance seals it away from public access.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, in contrast to the *Skanda's tīrtha* burial, places a sign of Viśvāmitra's *tapas* eternally and visibly in the realworld cosmos through the appearance of Viśvāmitra's so-called "counter-creation" (*pratisṛṣṭi*).[26] The commentator Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa poses a particularly intriguing reading of what precisely this means. As he explains, Viśvāmitra fixed Triśaṅku in the southern sky "just as Dhruva [the Pole star]

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[25] The narrative then further seals this passage through a description of how Indra, committing Brahmanicide, loses his status but regains it and returns to heaven by locating the pathway to this underground Hāṭakeśvara *tīrtha*. On his way out, though, Indra plugs the hole, contemplating, "If some man like the king Triśaṅku, though being sinful, should happen to faithfully worship this *liṅga*, he might cause me again to fall from heaven. Therefore I shall fill up this path to the netherworld" (*SkandaP* 6.8.29-30).

[26] While the word *pratisṛṣṭi* is not used in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it does become an item of folk speech characteristic to Viśvāmitra, appearing in a number of later story collections. While many people I spoke with in Pune in the winter of 2000-2001 immediately associated Viśvāmitra with his *pratisṛṣṭi*, few could actually tell me a story of Triśaṅku—if they did, they usually had read it, seen it on television or in performance.

remains fixed in the northern sky," and fashioned another *saptarṣi* constellation to revolve about him, "just as the 'Seven Seers' revolve around [Dhruva]" (*Rām GPP* 1.60.21, p. 336). As Govindarāja explains, Viśvāmitra then produced "twenty seven bands of constellations" in the southern sky (*Rām GPP* 1.60.21, p. 336), and Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa takes this to mean "in the regions that are outside of the paths charted in the original zodiac well-known in astrology" (*Rām GPP* 1.60.29-30, p. 337).[27] In this way, the epic Triśaṅku relocates the force of Viśvāmitra's *tapas* onto realworld phenomena, producing motifs (Triśaṅku's suspended Caṇḍāla body and Viśvāmitra's counter-creation) that persist in folk speech today as accounts of observable but inexplicable phenomena.

What exactly Viśvāmitra's *pratisṛṣṭi* entails has become a type of folk belief or superstition in contemporary Indian culture; during my research stay in Pune, in the winter of 2000-2001, I was able to collect a few versions. According to one (Brahman) account, Viśvāmitra began to create new worlds out of spite, but his creations became flawed due to his imperfect pseudo-Brahman status. Thus, as a counterpart to the horse, he created the ass; as a counterpart to the cow, he created the water buffalo; as a counterpart to the June monsoon, he created the weaker October monsoon.[28] Another

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[27] Doniger, among many others, has discussed the symbolic associations of the southern direction with pollution, inauspiciousness, and "evil"; the *Rāmāyaṇa's* presentation strengthens this exteriorized spatialization, by further requiring that Viśvāmitra's creations "remain in the sky outside of the circuit of the sun" (*Rām* 1.59.30).

[28] A. K. Ramanujan notes the belief "common in Indian myth and story" that "piqued by his own failure to send Triśaṅku to heaven, he decided to make a second world exclusively for him, a world like the first but a bit botched: it is said that the buffalo is Viśvāmitra's version of the cow, the donkey his version of the horse, and so on" (Ramanujan 1999c, 32). Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty notes that "'Viśvāmitra's creation' (*viśvāmitra-sṛṣṭi*) became a cliché for various things said to have been created by Viśvāmitra in imitation of Brahmā's creation: the pal fruit for the human skull,the buffalo for the cow, the ass for the horse, and so forth" (O'Flaherty 1984, 108). Such specific details are not found in any classical account. The *Rāmāyaṇa*,

(non-Brahman) version placed the blame of Viśvāmitra's faulty counter-creation on the intervention by the *apsaras* Menakā, ordered to seduce him as he manufactured his creation. There is also the Indian folk metaphor "to hang like Triśaṅku," meaning to be faced with an irresolvable impasse (see O'Flaherty 1984, 104-106). This metaphor, recalling Triśaṅku's physical body hanging upside-down in mid-air, can be found in Sanskrit literature as early as Kalidāsa's fourth-century *Abhijñāna-śākuntala*,[29] and is indeed in active usage even now, as the Marathi expression for a "hung jury" is that "the court has become Triśaṅku." Folk astronomy even maps Triśaṅku's body onto the constellation of Orion (Hariyappa 1953, 132),[30] and it is safe to say that while the Triśaṅku legend itself may no longer be an active folk narrative, these two motifs—Triśaṅku's permanently suspended body and Viśvāmitra's counter-creation—linger in the South Asian cultural 'pool of signifiers.' It is important to note that this Triśaṅku-lore emphasizes the indeterminacies of the narrative—is Viśvāmitra's counter-creation functional? (Not quite). Is Triśaṅku, even now, really in heaven? (Sort of). In the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Skanda Purāṇa's* retelling, this uncertainty comes to represent what

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as we have seen, limits the counter-creation to stars, constellations, and gods. This folk teleology—a folk myth, really—provides a common-sense foundation for an otherwise abstract event.

[29] At the end of Act II, the king Duṣyanta is torn between staying in the hermitage with his lover Śakuntalā and returning to the palace to fulfil his duties to his mother. The Vidūṣaka (the Brahman clown) suggests, "Hang yourself between them the way Triśaṅku hung between heaven and earth" (Miller 1984b, 109, Thapar 2002, 106). Romila Thapar places Kālidāsa in the fourth century, C.E. (Thapar 2002, 46), while Barbara Stoler Miller argues strongly for his association with the Gupta monarch Candragupta II (C.E. 375-415) (Miller 1984a, 9-12).

[30] This vision is perhaps not far removed from Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, who, as we have seen, regards Triśaṅku as a single, southern pole star like Dhruva in the northern hemisphere (*Rām GPP* 1.60.21). Though this astronomical mapping is also found in a number of purāṇic and śāstraic contexts, these are brief mentions, and seldom connected to the tellings of the story itself. Interestingly, only the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* tellings actually include the motif of Triśaṅku's midair (inverted) suspension—and even then, only in passing. In most cases Triśaṅku simply goes to heaven, and in nearly every case it is ambiguous into precisely which heaven he enters.

Jan Heesterman deems the classical "insolubility" of the Brahman and Ksatriya *varṇa* opposition (Heesterman 1985).

The place where this insolubility emerges most provocatively in the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling is in Vasiṣṭha's declaration that it is "impossible" for him to sacrifice so that Triśaṅku goes to heaven. Since Viśvāmitra in fact manages to do this, the commentator Govindarāja emphasizes that this does not indicate Vasiṣṭha's weakness or ignorance, but that "due to his knowledge of what had happened in past *kalpas*, he knew that attaining heaven in this way was not going to happen for Triśaṅku" (*Rām GPP* 1.57.12, p. 325). The later commentator Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa clarifies Govindarāja's assertion through a reference to the purāṇic narrative: "What happened prior to Vasiṣṭha's telling him that this is impossible, that is, the origin of this rejection, in addition to his well-known state of having three *śaṅkus* (daggers [of sin]), is all made clear in the *purāṇas*" (*Rām GPP* 1.57.13, p. 325). Beyond a pedantic concern for recuperating Vasiṣṭha's truthfulness, the commentators' discussion of a purāṇic intertext betrays an awareness of the difference between the epic and purāṇic versions of the legend—that the *Rāmāyaṇa* tells of Viśvāmitra's *tapas* while the *purāṇas* speak of Triśaṅku's sins.

II. The embodiment of caste: Satyavrata in the purāṇas (BhāgP 9.7.5-6, BrahmaP 7.97-8.23, BrahmāṇḍaP 63.77-114, HV 12.717-753, LiṅgaP 1.66.3-10, ŚivaP 7.60.81-7.61.19, VāyuP 83.78-116, ViṣṇuP 4.3.13-14)

When this legend appears in most purāṇic genealogies of the Ikṣvāku solar dynasty, something interesting occurs: it reads as nearly a different narrative altogether, told from the perspective of Triśaṅku. Exiled by his father for sexual misconduct, the prince redeems himself by providing for Viśvāmitra's wife and family during a severe

famine, though in doing so he earns the wrath of Vasiṣṭha and also the name "Triśaṅku" (meaning "he who has three *śaṅkus* [sins, horns, daggers]") when he kills the sage's cow. The distinction between the two legends is reinforced by the fact that he is almost exclusively referred to in the *purāṇas* as Satyavrata, his original given name—a name unmentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* version.[31] Satyavrata's story is mentioned in the dynastic chronicles (*vaṁśānucaritas*) of nine *mahāpurāṇas* as well as the *Harivaṁśa*, and six of these tell the story in such identical detail that they became the object of a crude 'critical' edition by Frederick Eden Pargiter (Pargiter 1914).[32]

Dating its composition to the sixth or seventh century, B.C.E., Pargiter distinguished this lost Kṣatriya historical tradition in the *purāṇas* from the later "brahmanic" epic tradition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* version of Triśaṅku (Pargiter 1914, 902).[33] A close analysis of Pargiter's methods makes it rather easy, today, to dismiss much of his outlandishly speculative histories, particularly his claims that there were four distinct, datable Vasiṣṭhas in ancient Indian dynastic history (Pargiter 1913, 901, note 2), and that the god Indra in these legends appeared as a misunderstood name for Vasiṣṭha (Pargiter 1913, 903). However, in the case of the Triśaṅku narrative, which forms a cornerstone of his vision of the "ancient Indian historical tradition" (Pargiter 1922), Pargiter makes an important observation that the epics and the purāṇic sources represent two distinct

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[31] Though perhaps there is a veiled allusion to the Satyavrata legend as Triśaṅku is described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a "truth-speaker [*satyavādin*]" (*Rām* 1.56.10b).

[32] Pargiter examined the following Satyavrata Triśaṅku narratives: *VāyuP* 83.78-116, *BrahmāṇḍaP* 63.77-114, *BrahmaP* 7.97-8.23, *HV* 12.717-753, *ŚivaP* 7.60.81-7.61.19, and *LiṅgaP* 1.66.3-10. The narrative is summarized briefly in *ViṣṇuP* 4.3.13-14 and *BhāgavataP* 9.7.5-6. Pargiter did not provide analyses of the variant Triśaṅku legends found in the *Devībhāgavata* (7.10-7.14) or *Skanda* (6.2-6.8) *Purāṇas*.

[33] For discussions of the impacts of Pargiter's methodologies on the discipline of ancient Indian history, see Chakrabarti 2001, 4, Thapar 2000, 711, Ghoshal 1965, 37-52, Hariyappa 1953, 325-326.

focalizations—the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Triśaṅku story is centered on Viśvāmitra, while the purāṇic Satyavrata story is centered on the king (Pargiter 1913, 901).

Less credible, however, is Pargiter's conclusion that that these texts reflect two different traditions, Kṣatriya and Brahman, one historical and the other mythological (Pargiter 1913, 904). Pargiter's theoretical approach, seminal but heavily contested,[34] relies on John Muir's earlier hypothesis that the Viśvāmitra legends reflect "early contests between the Brahmans and Kshattriyas" (Muir 1868, 296), but reverses the priority that Muir places on Vedic sources to reconstruct this history (Muir 1868, 318). Much of this project becomes speculative attempts to discover what *really* happened in ancient Indian history by filtering out the mythological 'chaff' from the kernels of history in the Triśaṅku narrative.

Instead, this chapter regards the relationship between epic and purāṇic versions as a 'conversation' of sorts, a series of retellings that are not independently composed but also not unconsciously retold—that is, these are not 'natural' variants. To explore this intertextuality, I begin with a complete translation of the *Harivaṁśa* version, along with the major variations found in the other five versions Pargiter examined, so that we may get a sense of the dialogue that takes place amidst the purāṇic versions of Satyavrata.[35] Then, turning to the medieval purāṇic sources—the *Skanda* and *Devībhāgavata*—we find that these texts themselves engage in reconstructive historical projects, as Pargiter did

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[34] Pargiter's most notable adversary was A. B. Keith, who critiqued him as heaping "conjecture upon conjecture" (Keith 1914, 125) and insisted on the primacy of Vedic sources; Pargiter offered a rebuttal in the very same issue of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, accusing Keith's perspective of making "brāhmāṇic tradition a critical standard of supreme authority" (Pargiter 1914, 412). A. D. Pusalker rejects both views, arguing that "there have never been in India two such water-tight compartments as the Brāhmaṇa tradition and the Kṣatriya tradition" (Pusalker 1952, 153); instead, he suggests that the *purāṇas* ought to be considered as "Vedas for the laity" (Pusalker 1952, 155).

[35] For the sake of readability, I have eliminated the vocatives that refer outside of the frame of the story.

and as we ourselves are tempted to do, in trying to make sense of the dissonance between epic and purāṇic versions. The *Skanda* tells the story through a religious framework (using the tropes of *tīrtha* and *bhakti*), and the *Devībhāgavata* chronologizes them, including another Viśvāmitra legend to 'glue' them together: the Śvapaca narrative, in which Viśvāmitra steals dogmeat from an untouchable's kitchen during a severe famine.

Here, then, is the *Harivaṁśa* version of the Satyavrata legend, along with its purāṇic variants (*HV* 1.9.88-1.10.23):

> From the King Tridhanvan was born the wise lord Trayyāruṇa, and he had a mighty son named Satyavrata.[36] Wicked-minded, he created an obstacle during a marriage ceremony, and stole off a wife already betrothed to another.[37] Due to his youth, his lust, his delusion, his excitement, his impetuousness, he wantonly stole the daughter of some townsman.[38] And due to these daggers of unrighteousness, King Trayyāruṇa, full of anger, exiled him repeatedly calling him a disgrace.[39] Forsaken by his father, he asked him again and again, "Where should I go?" His father said to him, "Go live with the Śvapākas! You disgrace to the family, because you are my son, I no longer wish to have sons."[40] Thus addressed, he set off from the city, due to his father's command, and Lord Vasiṣṭha, the *ṛṣi*, was unable to prevent it.[41]

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[36] The *Brahma*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, and *Śiva Purāṇas* give him the name 'Trayyāruṇi' (*BrahmaP* 7.97, *BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.76, *ŚivaP* 37.47). The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* states: "His son was the mighty Triśaṅku, who stole the wife of Vidarbha, defeating the gods while the marriage *mantras* were being made firm" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.77-78). The *Vāyu Purāṇa*, calling him Satyavrata here and not Triśaṅku, clarifies, "killing many gods when the marriage formulae had been finalized" (*VāyuP* 88.78-79). Explaining "Vidarbha," the *Vāyu* states, "His son was Viṣṇuvṛddha, from whom are remembered the Viṣṇuvṛddhas. They are all sons of Aṅgīrasa, who became full of Kṣatriyahood" (*VāyuP* 88.79) The *Liṅga Purāṇa* reads, "His mighty son was named Satyavrata, who stole Vidarbha's wife, killing that man of incomparable strength, while the *mantras* of marriage had not yet been made firm." (*LiṅgaP* 1.66.3-4).

[37] The *Śiva Purāṇa* states: "He had previously made an obstruction during the marriage *mantras* being carried out by important officials, and stolen a wife who had already been married to another" (*ŚivaP* 37.48).

[38] The *Brahma Purāṇa* reads, "By force, with lust, through delusion, with violence, through impetuousness, afflicted by desire, he stole some city-dweller's daughter" (*BrahmaP* 7.99). The *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* explain, "That mighty one did this due to lust, through coercion, and out of delusion, because of the forcible pull of future wealth" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.78, *VāyuP* 88.80). The *Śiva Purāṇa* states, "Due to his youth, his lust, his delusion, his excitement, and intoxication with liquor, he lustfully stole some city-dweller's daughter" (*ŚivaP* 37.49).

[39] The *Liṅga Purāṇa* says, simply, "Tainted by this immorality, the king Trayyāruṇa cast him off" (*LiṅgaP* 1.66.4).

[40] The *Liṅga* and *Śiva Purāṇas* omit this sentence.

[41] The *Liṅga* and *Śiva Purāṇas* omit the reference to Vasiṣṭha.

Satyavrata, thus abandoned by his father, lived in the vicinity of a Śvapāka settlement, while his valorous father also went to the forest.[42] Then, in that locale, Indra did not let it rain for twelve years because of this unrighteousness.[43] The mighty Viśvāmitra, leaving his wife in that region, had gone to practice great amounts of *tapas* in the coastal marshes.[44] And his wife had bound her middle son at the neck in order to sell his for a hundred cows, in order to feed the rest.[45] The virtuous king, seeing that the *maharṣi's* son was being sold,[46] tied at the neck, freed him. Mighty Satyavrata took to providing for them, in order to propitiate Viśvāmitra, as well as out of pure compassion. And since he was bound at the neck, that powerful Kauśika *maharṣi* freed by that warrior was called Gālava.[47]

Satyavrata, through devotion, through mercy, and keeping his promise, took care of Viśvāmitra's family, remaining respectful.[48] Killing deer and boar, and forest-dwelling buffalo,[49] he would tie up the meat near Viśvāmitra's hermitage. Remaining devoted to this secret vow, he performed this service for twelve years, and remained there, due to his father's injunction.[50]

When the king had gone into the forest, the sage Vasiṣṭha, in his connection as the priestly administrator, looked after the city of Ayodhyā, the kingdom, and the inner quarters. But Satyavrata, on account of his youth, or perhaps the force of future wealth, continued to bear an incredible grudge against Vasiṣṭha: The sage Vasiṣṭha, did not, for whatever reason, try to prevent his father

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[42] The *Śiva Purāṇa* reads, "King Trayyāruṇi, disaffected by his son's actions, abandoned everything and went into the forest to perform *tapas* towards Śaṅkara" (*ŚivaP* 37.53).
[43] The 'K$_4$' manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa* inserts the following two verses after this sentence: "And shortly, because of the king's and Vasiṣṭha's thoughtlessness, because the son had been abandoned, Indra did not let it rain. When twelve years went by, this destroyed the people. *Svāhā*, *svadhā*, and *vaṣaṭ* sounds no longer happened, and in that king's kingdom, *dharma* was lost" (*HV* 194*). The *Liṅga Purāṇa* omits the subnarrative of Viśvāmitra's wife, stating only that "This is how the valorous Triśaṅku became known all over the world" (*LiṅgaP* 1.66.7).
[44] The *Brahma Purāṇa* reads, "at the edge of the ocean" (*BrahmaP* 7.106).
[45] Here, manuscript K$_4$ of the *HV* inserts the following eight verses of dialogue between Viśvāmitra's wife and her sons: "At this time, the sons of Viśvāmitra, though skilled and knowledgeable in the Vedas, were tormented by hunger. While Viśvāmitra had gone far away to do very extreme *tapas*, great Bhārata, they all reverently said to their mother, 'Mother, you ought to please sell one son, otherwise we will all die, tormented by hunger. Sell a son and survive, until our father returns. When faced with losing everything, people let go of half, so that they can accomplish the task with the remainder—this is the ancient *śruti*: Forsake an individual for the sake of the family, forsake the family for the sake of the village; forsake the village for the sake of the country, and for the *ātman*, forsake everything. Therefore, sell your sons, Mother, and survive happily. Otherwise we will all go to our deaths along with you. In Ayodhyā, very thoughtful, powerful men employ all those who have come there to be servants. Therefore sell me first, mother, and feed my elder; afterwards, sell them all, if it still does not rain'" (*HV* 195*).
[46] The *Śiva Purāṇa* specifies: "Seeing her sell her own child…" (*ŚivaP* 37.57).
[47] The *Śiva Purāṇa* reads, "From then on, the son of the sage Viśvāmitra became called Gālava, because the ascetic had been tied at the neck.
[48] The *Śiva Purāṇa* specifies that Satyavrata took care of "Viśvāmitra's wife" (*ŚivaP* 38.1), and omits "remaining respectful."
[49] The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* reads "water-roaming buffalo" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.91).
[50] The *Śiva Purāṇa* omits this sentence.

from exiling his favorite son from the kingdom. The marriage ceremony becomes fixed only on the seventh step, and therefore Satyavrata had not stolen her during the seventh step.[51] Thinking, "He knew *dharma*, but still Vasiṣṭha did not come to my aid," Satyavrata developed anger in his heart towards Vasiṣṭha.[52]

Though Lord Vasiṣṭha had in fact borne respectful thoughts towards him,[53] Satyavrata did not learn of his silent prayers. "Since his father was so displeased with him, Indra has not allowed it to rain for twelve years. And now he bears this burden, the most difficult rite of initiation [*dīkṣā*] in the world—the restoration of his family, if in fact it may be accomplished."[54] And so Lord Vasiṣṭha did not protect him as he was abandoned by his father, thinking, "I will coronate his son."[55]

The powerful [Satyavrata] remained devoted to servitude for twelve years. Not finding any meat, the prince then spied great Vasiṣṭha's cow that granted all desires [*sarvakāmadhuk*]. In anger, delusion,[56] and great exasperation, full of hunger, the king, full of the ten *dharmas*, killed her.[57] He ate her meat himself, and fed it to Viśvāmitra's sons. Hearing about this, Vasiṣṭha raged, "I should cause an iron dagger of sin [*śaṅku*] to fall onto you; and if you had not already committed these two crimes;[58] since you have displeased your father, killed your *guru's* cow, and since you improperly used it, your transgressions are threefold."

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[51] The *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vāyu Purāṇa* read, conversely, "Satyavrata *had* stolen her during the seventh step" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.96, *VāyuP* 88.97).

[52] The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* specifies that "knowing the nine *mantras* of *dharma*, Vasiṣṭha wanted this to happen" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.97), while the *Vāyu Purāṇa* says, "Knowing this, Vasiṣṭha chose not to give him moral advice" (*VāyuP* 88.98).

[53] The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* states, "Lord Vasiṣṭha, with a virtuous mind, performed *tapas*, though Satyavrata did not learn of his secret prayers" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.98). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* states, "Lord Vasiṣṭha had acted with a *guru's* intelligence, but Satyavrata did not realize his secret prayers" (*VāyuP* 88.99).

[54] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* changes this around—Vasiṣṭha feels that Satyavrata "is haughty towards his father, who has retired, and so Indra did not let it rain for twelve years. So now, he should have to do this service, so difficult to bear, so that he may himself bring about the restoration of his family" (*VāyuP* 88.100-101).

[55] The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* states, "Lord Vasiṣṭha did not prevent his being abandoned by his father, thinking, 'I will coronate him after it is over'" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.101). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* similarly says, "Lord Vasiṣṭha kept away from him, who was cast off by his father, thinking, 'Afterwards, I will coronate him as king'" (*VāyuP* 88.102).

[56] The *Śiva Purāṇa* here says, "out of covetousness" (*ŚivaP Umā-saṁ.* 38.10).

[57] Several manuscripts of the *Harivaṁśa* enumerate these ten as follows: "Drunken, intoxicated, frenzied, tired, angered, starving, frazzled, frightened, greedy, lustful—these are the ten" (*HV* 199*). The *Brahma Purāṇa* states, "becoming of 'country' morals, the king killed her" (*BrahmaP* 8.15). The *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* read, "Assuming the nature of a *dasyu*, the great mighty man saw her and slew her" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.104 *VāyuP* 88.105). The *Śiva Purāṇa* reads, "Gone into a state of distress, he killed her" (*ŚivaP Umā-saṁ.* 38.11).

[58] The *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Vāyu Purāṇas* state, "Hey evil, evil one! Let a dagger made of iron fall upon you, lowly wretch of a man, if in fact you do not already have three daggers of sin" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.106, *VāyuP* 88.107).

> Therefore, observing these three daggers of sin, the great ascetic called him Triśaṅku, and so he is remembered as Triśaṅku.
>
> Meanwhile, Viśvāmitra returned to his wife, while [Satyavrata] had been taking care of her.[59] The sage gladly gave him a boon.[60] The prince, as his boon, chose him to be his *guru*.[61] When twelve years had passed under the hardships of drought, that sage Kauśika consecrated him as the king and sacrificed on his behalf, as the gods and Vasiṣṭha looked on helplessly.[62]

Realizing that the purāṇic tellings are "all obviously based on common original metrical tradition," Pargiter believed that "by collating them a revised text may be framed" (Pargiter 1914, 885). In doing so, he noted a few of variant readings which he attributed to Brahman "tampering." As he put it, "the *Vāyu* text shows unmistakable traces, and the *Brahmāṇḍa* some traces, of having been tampered with, with the result that Satyavrata's misconduct is exaggerated and Vasiṣṭha's severity extenuated" (Pargiter

[59] The *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Śiva*, and *Vāyu Purāṇas* read, "Viśvāmitra returned to his wife in order to feed her, and then fondly gave Triśaṅku a boon" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.109, *ŚivaP Umā-saṁ.* 38.15-16, *VāyuP* 88.110).
[60] The *Brahma Purāṇa* reads, "But since he had fed Viśvāmitra's wife, so the sage gladly gave Triśaṅku a boon" (*BrahmaP* 8.20). The *Liṅga Purāṇa* alternatively states, "The radiant Viśvāmitra, who had previously been a king, dedicated to truth, of virtuous character, out of anger granted Triśaṅku a boon" (*LiṅgaP* 1.66.8).
[61] The *Brahma Purāṇa* instead states, "The prince, choosing his boon, then chose this: 'I should go to heaven in my own body.' This was the boon he chose" (*BrahmaP* 8.21). The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* says, "Choosing him as his *guru* with his boon, the prince chose, 'May I go to heaven in my own body.' This is the boon he chose" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.110).
[62] The *Brahma Purāṇa* reads, "As the gods as well as Vasiṣṭha looked on helplessly, Kauśika caused him to reach heaven in his own body" (*BrahmaP* 8.22-23). The *Brahmāṇḍa* elaborates further: "And when the twelve years of the terror of famine had passed, the sage consecrated him into his father's kingship, and then made preparations for this. As the gods and Vasiṣṭha looked on, Lord Kauśika then delivered him to heaven in his own body. As Vasiṣṭha looked on helplessly, this miraculous event took place. And so the *paurāṇika* people narrate this with a *śloka* [verse]: By the grace of Viśvāmitra, the radiant Triśaṅku was made to enjoy heaven, alongside the gods, through the favor of that powerful one" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.63.111-114). The *Śiva Purāṇa* reads, "Lord Kauśika, as the gods and Vasiṣṭha looked on helplessly, caused him to ascend to heaven in his own body" (*ŚivaP Umā-saṁ.* 38.18). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* interestingly states, "And in the mountain forests in the Vindhya foothills, there arose his very sacred mountain river, an auspicious river that eliminated his *karma* by bathing in it. And in his own body, the lord reached heaven. As Vasiṣṭha looked on, this miracle took place, and so *paurāṇika* people narrate this verse: By the grace of Viśvāmitra, the mighty Triśaṅku was made to enjoy heaven, mingling with the gods, through the kindness of that great one" (*VāyuP* 88.113-115).

1914, 889).[63] The most significant variation, however, seems to involve the story's ending: what Satyavrata chooses as his boon from Viśvāmitra, and what ultimately happens to the ill-fated Ikṣvāku king. The *Harivaṁśa* and *Vāyu Purāṇa* suggest that he asked Viśvāmitra to become his *guru*, while the *Brahma* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* explicitly state that, as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, his request was to go bodily into heaven.[64] In all but the *Harivaṁśa*, the king is eventually led to heaven in his own body, though in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, since this was not the boon he had asked for, there is an additional, religious twist. According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, "in the mountain forests in the Vindhya foothills, there arose his very sacred mountain river, an auspicious river that eliminated his *karma* by his bathing in it. Thus, in his own body, the lord reached heaven" (*VāyuP* 88.113). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* then suggestively links this event with people it terms "*paurāṇikas*": "As Vasiṣṭha looked on, this miracle took place, and so the *paurāṇika* people narrate this verse: By the grace of Viśvāmitra, the mighty Triśaṅku was made to enjoy heaven, mingling with the gods, through that great one's kindness" (*VāyuP* 88.114-

[63] More specifically, Pargiter suggested that in claiming that Satyavrata had stolen the bride *after* the wedding rituals had been completed (*samprāpiteṣu*) (*VāyuP* 88.79), the *Vāyu Purāṇa* "has altered the meaning to the absolute opposite…showing that it has been deliberately tampered with, so as to exaggerate Satyavrata's guilt and consequently to justify Vasiṣṭha's want of pity" (Pargiter 1914, 894). These two versions also claim that he killed "the gods [*divaukasaḥ*]"—"an impossible exaggeration to Satyavrata's violence" (Pargiter 1914, 894). He compares these to the *Liṅga Purāṇa*'s reading "*amitaujasam*" (man of immense power). These two purāṇic versions also seem to alter Vasiṣṭha's "silent prayers": instead of coronating his son, in the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*, Vasiṣṭha expresses a desire to re-install Satyavrata as king, after his tribulations were over. Pargiter felt "it is hardly probable that Vasiṣṭha would anoint the prince whom he had allowed to be degraded by years of association with the lowest outcastes" (Pargiter 1914, 895), suggesting further Brahmanic tampering.

[64] The *Liṅga* and *Śiva Purāṇas* are silent on this issue. The synopses of the narrative found in the *Bhāgavata* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇas* are likewise ambiguous regarding Viśvāmitra's boon, though in both Triśaṅku is sent to heaven by Viśvāmitra's power. The *Mahābhārata* mentions this narrative in two places—once, within the Menakā story (*Mbh* 1.65), it is claimed that Viśvāmitra sacrificed for a king Mātaṅga who had sustained his wife during a famine (1.65.31-33). The other reference comes, as we have seen, in Yudhiṣṭhira's query (*Mbh* 13.3.9), where the reference seems to be based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative.

115).[65] This verse is not actually found in any available purāṇic text. Assuming that these two *purāṇas*, and particularly the *Vāyu*, are referencing an oral *paurāṇika* tradition, it suggests a performative attempt to fuse together multiple narrative traditions. When they mention the *paurāṇikas*, the composers are connecting this legend to a presupposed, performed narrative tradition, in which the most important motif is that Viśvāmitra raised Triśaṅku to heaven.

If it is not in any written *purāṇas*, where is this verse coming from? One intriguing possibility is that this is a reference to *Bālakāṇḍa* version, and the emphasis on 'the great one's kindness,' harmonic with the *Rāmāyaṇa's* characterization of Viśvāmitra's compassion (*kṛpā*) supports such a claim (*Rām* 1.58.1). If indeed this is a reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* legend, then the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* are critically correlating the presupposed purāṇic genealogical legend of Satyavrata with the alternative, epic telling of Triśaṅku, much like the commentator Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭ who approaches the problem from the other direction.

A closer reading of the purāṇic Satyavrata legend reveals that its complementarity with the Triśaṅku legend is achieved through a harmonization of motifs. Due to his forcible abduction of a citizen's bride during a marriage, he is ordered to live "with the Śvapākas" by his distraught father.[66] This event is parallel to his being cursed to

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[65] The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, very closely related to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, also mentions these '*paurāṇika-janāḥ*' and exactly cites the same verse, though it leaves out the river-bathing motif.

[66] The *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāyu*, and *Liṅga Purāṇas* further specify Satyavrata's victim to be 'Vidarbha.' If this signifies a king or prince of Vidarbha, it possibly provides a subtext of regional politics to these versions. Pargiter dismisses this as merely a personal name,

> Because (1) the kingdom of Vidarbha did not come into existence until later, (2) such an insult offered to a king would have been avenged by war, yet there is no suggestion of any such reprisals being feared, while it is distinctly suggested that Vasiṣṭha might have mitigated the punishment; and (3) the term *kulapāṁsana* implied that the prince had dishonoured his rank, and the rape of a mere city maiden was a disgraceful offence. (Pargiter 1914, 893)

Caṇḍālahood in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but here we can see that the motif is detailed in what Pargiter argues is a more rational, historically accurate explanation for Triśaṅku's outsider status, since it does not involve supernatural bodily transformations.

The next event, Triśaṅku's rescue of Viśvāmitra's family, functions as a reversal of fortune for Satyavrata as well as atonement for his earlier sexual crimes, what the texts refer to as his *dīkṣā* (initiation).[67] However, Satyavrata feeds the family by slaying Vasiṣṭha's wish-giving cow, here referred to as "*sarvakāmadhuk*." In an obvious transformation of this motif of the *kāmadhenu* legend, the purāṇic Satyavrata succeeds, in mutated form, at what Viśvāmitra had tried to do—to take Vasiṣṭha's wondrous cow by force. For Viśvāmitra, the resulting violent confrontation with Vasiṣṭha induces his *varṇa* transformation; for Satyavrata, his confrontation with Vasiṣṭha induces the transformation of his name, and sets him on the road to heaven.

The supplementarity of the epic Triśaṅku and the purāṇic Satyavrata legends is twofold—they complete one another's stories, and in doing so, they engage in an inter-generic dialogue about *varṇa* boundary-crossing: the *purāṇas* narrate royal genealogy, while the epic is interested in *tapas* and in "doing the impossible." It seems clear, therefore, that a complete understanding of either cannot result from isolated readings. Furthermore, neither Indological alternatives—Pargiter's text-historicism nor White's structuralism, seem to do justice to this web of intertextuality, reducing the textual performance of the Triśaṅku narrative either to unilateral Brahmanic reconstructions of the 'authentic' Kṣatriya tradition (Pargiter) or to inert documentary reflections (White).

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[67] See Kane 1990, vol. 5: 1116-1119 for the historical development of *dīkṣā* from Vedic to tantric *guru* systems.

The problem with Triśaṅku seems to lie in the analyst's instinctive desire to explain away textual variation—what Roland Barthes has deemed the "myth of filiation."[68] The plurality of the text, Barthes warns, is "not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, a traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination" (Barthes 1979, 76). This 'explosion' is pedantic in the commentator's metatextual breakthrough, and pithy in the *paurāṇikas'* verse, but comes to command a religious power in the later *Skanda* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* versions. I now turn to how this explosive power was actively translated by these medieval Sanskrit *purāṇas* by relocating the legendary events of Triśaṅku's life within realworld geographical, historical, and devotional sites.

III. An untouchable in heaven: Satyavrata Triśaṅku in the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa (DBhP 7.10-14)

Intertextuality, from a Barthesian perspective, is a process through which the reader, precisely through the act of reading, assumes a position of dominance over the text received from the 'dead' author (see Orr 2003, 34-35). The reader has the potential to read a text however he or she pleases. In a narrative tradition, however, which always involves a performer in addition to readers and texts, this "explosive" potential exists side-by-side with the narrator's enforcement of textual fidelity to this tradition. That is, while a reader may interpret a received text however he or she pleases, a storyteller who performs the text is obliged to retell the story in its 'authentic' form. When the medieval composers of the *Devībhāgavata* and *Skanda Purāṇas* assembled their versions of the

[68] Barthes admits that filiation is involved in the 'Work' (the literary domain of the author) rather than 'Text' (the domain of the reader). The 'Text', according to Barthes, must be understood as a web of intertexts, rather than as a genetically developing organism (the 'Work') (Barthes 1979).

Triśaṅku story, they received two textual traditions: the epic Triśaṅku legend (of the king's ascension to heaven) and the purāṇic Satyavrata legend (of the prince's restoration to the throne). Faced with having to reconcile two distinct narrative traditions, the purāṇic composer's presentation of the story becomes a performative act.[69] The *Skanda Purāṇa*, for example, by maintaining fidelity to the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling and neglecting the purāṇic versions, allows the narrative to be fixed to a geographic location—the *tīrthas* in the Hāṭakeśvara-kṣetra region of Gujarat (modern-day Saurashtra). In this regard, the *Skanda's* Triśaṅku legend is closely related to a seventeenth-century text known as the *Viśvāmitrī-māhātmya*, which expands Triśaṅku's pilgrimage along sites specific to the Viśvāmitrī river in Gujarat that passes through the city of Vadodara (Baroda).[70] It is this geographical concern, I suggest, that induces the *Skanda's* ignorance of the Satyavrata story. The historical implications of the Satyavrata legend, as we will soon see, are essentially fixed in Ayodhyā and its environs and cannot easily be transplanted to Gujarat, while the events of the Triśaṅku's divine ascension are dissociated from the city, and allow the medieval text to transplant them onto a river hundreds of miles away from Ayodhyā.[71]

As far as I have been able to determine, the *Devībhāgavata* offers the only existing Sanskrit telling of this legend that combines both the Satyavrata and Triśaṅku

[69] A reconciliation between these two distinct narrative traditions, as we have noted, also comes from the medieval *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators, who 'read' the purāṇic Satyavrata legend to clarify and supplement the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Triśaṅku story. Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa's purāṇic reference demonstrates that by the medieval period both epic and early purāṇic tellings were read together in order to understand a hypothetical 'Work'—the complete story of Satyavrata Triśaṅku.
[70] See Thaker 1997. Jayant Thaker suggests the date of composition of this text to be the seventeenth century (Thaker 1997, 64), and notes that the *Viśvāmitrī-māhātmya* considers itself to be a part of the *Revākhaṇḍa* or *Uttarakhaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* (Thaker 1997, 50).
[71] Recensions of an eight- or ninth-century redaction of the "original" *Skanda Purāṇa* (composed in the sixth and seventh centuries) transplant the events of the Triśaṅku legend along the northern reaches of the Gaṅgā (see the Groningen *SkandaP*).

subtypes, fusing them together through the inserted Śvapaca narrative, which tells the story of Viśvāmitra stealing dogmeat from a Caṇḍāla enclave during a severe famine.[72] The Triśaṅku and Satyavrata legend-types never occur in combination elsewhere, and likewise the Śvapaca legend is also only found in isolated versions. Above all, it appears that the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* is interested in concretely and sensibly arranging these three narratives along a single, linear chronology.

The *Devībhāgavata* begins with a narration of the Satyavrata legend practically identical to early purāṇic versions. While the narration is more lucid, the sequence of events are unchanged, up to Vasiṣṭha's curse and Satyavrata's name-change.[73] Then, explains the *Devībhāgavata*, the king turned into a *piśāca.* At this point, Janamejaya, to whom Vyāsa is telling the story, interjects and asks how Triśaṅku was released from this curse. "Cursed," responds Vyāsa, "Satyavrata remained as a *piśāca*, and stayed in the hermitage, devoted to *devī-bhakti*" (*DBhP* 7.11.3). Performing a *japa* (recitation) of nine syllables to the Goddess, Triśaṅku then approached a group of Brahmans to perform a *homa* (offering) as "the tenth part of the prayer" (*DBhP* 7.11.5). However, they shunned him and said, "You are cursed by your *guru*, and you've become a *piśāca*. Therefore it is

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[72] The *Mahābhārata*, it should be said, combines elements from the Satyavrata and Triśaṅku legends in a brief, four-verse allusion during the Menakā legend (*Mbh* 1.65.31-34). While noting that Viśvāmitra sacrificed for the heavenly ascension of a king 'Mataṅga' (*Mbh* 1.65.33), producing a counter-creation (*Mbh* 1.65.34), Menakā also tells Indra—who has instructed her to seduce the sage—that this *rājarṣi* Mataṅga, though he had become low-caste (*vyādhatām gataḥ*), had previously rescued the sage's wife during famine (*Mbh* 1.65.31) while the sage was engaged in ascetic practice (*Mbh* 1.65.32). It does not, however, mention the prior sins of Triśaṅku that result in his low-caste status.

[73] For example, it is clearly stated that Satyavrata stole the wife of a Brahman (*DBhP* 7.10.8b, 12), Triśaṅku's reasoning for stealing her is clarified—"During a marriage ceremony if it is done while the seventh step is being conducted, it is not like stealing a Brahman's wife" (*DBhP* 7.10.50), and his slaughter of the cow is depicted as a hostile act: "He killed her, afflicted by hunger, but also out of anger and delusion, like a *dasyu*, a wretch" (*DBhP* 7.10.52ab).

unsuitable to sacrifice for you. You have no authority in the Vedas. You have become a *piśāca*, shunned across the world!" (*DBhP* 7.11.8).

Rejected, Triśaṅku then resolved to end his life, prepared a fire, and, "thinking of the Goddess Mahāmāyā, lit the front of the heap, bathed, and stood in front of it, hands folded, ready to enter it" (*DBhP* 7.11.12).[74] But at that last moment, the Goddess graced him with a visit, and assured him that "The day after tomorrow, King, your father's ministers will come to take you back, by my grace. Your father shall coronate you to the royal throne" (*DBhP* 7.11.16-17). The *devarṣi* (divine sage) Nārada then went to Ayodhyā and relayed these events to Triśaṅku's father, who, full of remorse, retracted his injunction and invited his son back. Installing him in the throne next to him, Triśaṅku's father then provided a lengthy summary of the *nītiśāstra* (*DBhP* 7.11.33-53), including how to behave with one's allies and enemies, whom to trust, the virtues of worshipping the Goddess, and the use of Brahmans to expound *dharma*.[75] He then coronated his son and retired to the forest to practice *tapas*.

Still unsatisfied, Janamejaya once again poses his question:

> Great Lord, you have indeed properly told the whole of the first part of the story, of how Satyavrata was cursed by Vasiṣṭha for killing the cow, and how, on account of his angry *guru*, he became a *piśāca*. How then was he released from his *piśāca* condition? I am curious, my Lord—for if he still had the curse, he would be unsuitable for the throne…How could his father possibly bring him back home looking like that? (*DBhP* 7.12.7-10)

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[74] David Kinsley notes that while *māyā* (illusion) has negative connotations of false materiality in Sāṁkhya philosophy and *yoga*, as something to be escaped or liberated from, the Devī's identification with existence per se is clearly intended to be a positive philosophic assertion" (Kinsley 1986, 136).

[75] P. V. Kane considers *nītiśāstra* as synonymous with *rājadharma* or *arthaśāstra* (Kane 1990, vol. 3: 8), and points out the ambivalent relationship between *śāstras* of *dharma* and *artha* (Kane 1990, vol. 3: 9), noting that Kauṭilya "requires the minister knowing arthaśāstra to advise the king (with examples and precepts derived) from itihāsa and *purāṇa*" (Kane 1990, vol. 3: 10).

Vyāsa then must backtrack in his narration a bit and explain: "as soon as Satyavrata worshipped the Goddess with devotion, she became gratified and immediately granted him a divine body. His *piśāca* state was gone, and his sins also absolved" (*DBhP* 7.12.12-13). This backtracking demonstrates the dynamics of textual performance, offering a recording of a twelfth-century negotiation between what the performer thinks is the important religious point of the story—the legitimacy of *devī-bhakti*—and what his audience insists is the important question—social and political status.[76] Doniger explains that the *Devībhāgavata* reflects "a worldview in which extraordinary religious powers (asceticism and devotion) can work miracles" (O'Flaherty 1984, 108), and the textual performance in fact suggests that the composer is trying to *convince* his audience of this notion.

After this *devī-bhakti* interlude, the *Devībhāgavata* begins the epic legend as Triśaṅku, installing his son Hariścandra on the throne, "then set his mind upon enjoying heaven in a human body" (*DBhP* 7.12.17). This half of the story is also presented in a highly dramatized form, but one that nonetheless maintains a remarkable fidelity to the plot sequence presented in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with one major change. As in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Vasiṣṭha refused to do the sacrifice, instead offering him advice: "Make sacrifices, illustrious one, and die—then you will go to heaven" (*DBhP* 7.12.26). However, when Triśaṅku threatened to hire another family priest to perform the sacrifice, Vasiṣṭha himself (not his sons) cursed him to become a Caṇḍāla.[77] Triśaṅku then left his throne

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[76] As Brown explains, the *Devībhāgavata* "attempts to establish various historical precedents for the legitimacy, propriety, and necessity of Devī-worship" (Brown 1990, 166).

[77] The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* uses this curse as a warning against offending a Goddess-worshipper: "King, such was the result of the rage of the Goddess-worshipper. Therefore you should never offend a devotee of the great Goddess. Vasiṣṭha, the great sage, is ever chanting the Gāyatrī *mantra*" (*DBhP* 7.12.34-35). This

and resolved to suffer the consequences of his deeds, to attend to *tīrthas*, to meditate on Ambikā (the Goddess),[78] and to serve holy men, thinking: "I will diminish this deed, while I live in the forest, and maybe through the force of destiny, I will perhaps again commune with the good" (*DBhP* 7.12.48). His son Hariścandra (who will have adventures of his own in the *Devībhāgavata*) heard of his father's fate, and dispatched ministers to persuade him to return home, but Triśaṅku refused to defile the kingdom, and so Hariścandra was then crowned king.

At this point, Janamejaya, again interjects his question: "How was Triśaṅku then liberated, since he now had a Caṇḍāla body" (*DBhP* 7.13.1)? The answer is the same as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*—through the help of the extraordinary power of Viśvāmitra—but it is now given through a *bhakti*-centered lens. Viśvāmitra, learning that it was Triśaṅku that had nobly sustained his wife and children during the famine, resolved to end the king's misery himself, and, "pondering this, the sage went to where the miserable king Triśaṅku was living in a hut, appearing like a Śvapaca" (*DBhP* 7.13.52-53).[79] Then, "grasping the king's hands that had quickly fallen at his feet like staffs, he raised up the king" (*DBhP* 7.13.54-55).

Viśvāmitra then arranged for a Vedic sacrifice, but in this version, it was disrupted by Vasiṣṭha's politics: "The sages Viśvāmitra invited did not come once they

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statement, of course, is ironic since the seership of the Gāyatrī is a *mantra* ordinarily ascribed to Viśvāmitra.

[78] Following the conventional view of the normative 'split-image' of the Goddess (most powerfully articulated in Kakar 1978, O'Flaherty 1980, and Ramanujan 1986, but questioned in Raheja and Gold 1994, 32-38) Brown asserts that the *Devībhāgavata* "attempts to split the Goddess into two rather sharply distinguished features" Brown 1990, 120), with the "alluring" and "defiant" Ambikā being the polar opposite of the "horrific and bloodthirsty" Kālī.

[79] Significantly, instead of Triśaṅku coming to Viśvāmitra for help, the *Devībhāgavata* reverses the situation– Viśvāmitra enters into Caṇḍāla domestic space to save Triśaṅku—and it is a mapping that the *Devībhāgavata* reinforces through telling the *Śvapaca* legend.

learned about the ceremony, for they were prevented from doing so by Vasiṣṭha" (*DBhP* 7.14.2). Undeterred, Viśvāmitra forcefully "infused within him the auspiciousness arising from the gāyatrī" (*DBhP* 7.14.6), and vaulted Triśaṅku, still a Caṇḍāla, up into the sky towards heaven.[80] Deified in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* as the Goddess (Brown 1990, 164), the Gāyatrī *mantra* (*RV* 3.62.10) links Viśvāmitra's ascetic powers with those of the Goddess,[81] making this counter-normative Vedic personality the prototypical exponent of *devī-bhakti*.[82]

As Triśaṅku arrived at heaven's gate, Indra, disgusted, threw him back down, but Viśvāmitra, using his *tapas*, suspended him in the air (*DBhP* 7.14.17). Viśvāmitra set about to manufacture a new creation, which the *Devībhāgavata* deems "a second heaven" (*DBhP* 7.14.18), but apparently never actually did so, because Indra, fearing the consequences, acquiesced to Viśvāmitra's demand to "take this untouchable king, the suffering Triśaṅku, to his own abode, away from this earth" (*DBhP* 7.14.21). Then, "making the king's body divine" (*DBhP* 7.14.23), Indra allowed Triśaṅku to enter heaven freely. In doing so, the *Devībhāgavata* introduces two changes to the *Rāmāyaṇa* version: Viśvāmitra's counter-creation does not take place, and Indra's divine power cleanses the untouchability of Triśaṅku's body, just as the Goddess had done before. By constructing a homology between the divine power of Indra and the Goddess, as well as one between

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[80] The seer of the Gāyatrī *mantra*—that is, the Savitṛ *mantra*, in *gāyatrī* meter—is Viśvāmitra, and not only is the *mantra* well-known throughout Indian religious history, it is also often said to be the only Vedic *mantra* available for general (non-twice-born) consumption.

[81] For thorough analyses of Viśvāmitra as the seer of the *gāyatri* in Vedic literature, see Rahurkar 1964, Hariyappa 1953, Sharma 1975, Chaubey 1987.

[82] Brown notes, "The recitation of the Gāyatrī mantra is thus equated with Devī-worship," and that the gāyatrī is considered by the *Devībhāgavata* to be "the mother of the Vedas" (Brown 1990, 164). P. G. Lalye has noted that the twelfth chapter of the *Devībhāgavata* is "devoted to the glorification of the Gāyatrī" (Lalye 1973, 204).

Viśvāmitra's *tapas* (embodied by the Gāyatrī *mantra*/Goddess) and Triśaṅku's *devī-bhakti*, the *Devībhāgavata* is able to represent the Goddess as supreme and to demonstrate how, like *tapas*, *devī-bhakti* can make the impossible possible.

The Śvapaca narrative (*Mbh* 12.139, *DBhP* 7.13, *BrahmaP* 93, *SkandaP* 6.90)

The Satyavrata and Triśaṅku legends are presented chronologically in the *Devībhāgavata*, but in between them is inserted the legend of Viśvāmitra's eating dogmeat during famine. While the king, cursed into Caṇḍālahood, retires to the forest and meditates on the Goddess, "the sage Kauśika, completing his performance of *tapas*, returned to see his wife, children, and so on" (*DBhP* 7.13.4-5). Reunited with his wife, Viśvāmitra explained in detail what had happened to him during the famine in which Triśaṅku had looked after her and their children, about how he was impelled by the force of hunger to steal dogmeat from a Śvapaca's (Dog-cooker's) kitchen. He told her,

> I was also afflicted by hunger, in the forest, with emaciated thighs. So, behaving like a thief, I entered into a Śvapaca's home somewhere. I was extremely afflicted with hunger, and so, seeing that the Śvapaca was asleep, I went into the kitchen to find something to eat. When I opened a pot and took out a cooked piece of dog meat to eat it, he saw me, and respectfully asked me, 'Who are you? How did you get into my house tonight? Tell me what you are going to do, and why you are opening my pots?'
>
> Addressed in this way by the Śvapaca, but still ravaged by hunger, I told him what I wanted, in a trembling voice. "I am a Brahman, good Sir, an ascetic, full of hunger. Acting like a thief I have come here, and I see food in the pot. Wise Sir, I have come here with an intent to steal, but as I am your guest, and am hungry, please give me permission, and I will eat this well-prepared meat."
>
> The Śvapaca, however, hearing my words, said to me, "Don't eat this, you are of the highest *dharma*! Undoubtedly, you ought to be aware that this is a Śvapaca home. It is difficult to be born as a human, and particularly as a twice-born, and among twice-born, being [born] a Brahman is very difficult. You know this, of course—how could you not? Desiring heavens, a sage should not eat polluting foods. Seven lower castes have been proclaimed as untouchable by a

sage, on account of their activities. I am an untouchable, by occupation—I am a Śvapaca—there is no doubt about this. And so I will prevent you from eating this, not by force, nor by greed, Brahman. Great Brahman, do not let the sin of *varṇa* intermixture fall upon you."

[Viśvāmitra said,] "You speak truly, *dharma*-knower. Your mind is pure, outcaste. Still, I am speaking about the subtle path of *dharma*; during a time of distress, respectful one, a person should always protect his own body. After committing sin, one should then perform atonement for purification. Difficult consequences come from sinning during times of no distress, but not during an emergency. Moreover, dying while hungry leads to hell, there is no doubt. Therefore, with these auspicious intentions, I must eliminate my hunger. And so I will now protect my body by behaving like a thief, outcaste. When there has been no rain, say the wise, the sin of theft accrues to him who has not let it rain."

As I was saying these words, my sweet, it immediately began to rain from the sky, appearing like showers from elephant trunks. Seeing the clouds pouring forth and the lightning, I then slipped out of that house with great joy. (*DBhP* 7.13.10-28)

This Śvapaca legend is found in three other versions in epic and purāṇic literature: briefly in the *Brahma* and *Skanda Purāṇas* and most elaborately in the *Śānti Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 12.139).[83] In the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata* versions, which are clearly related, the central moment of the narrative is a dialogue (*saṁvāda*) between Viśvāmitra and the Śvapaca about how dharmic individuals may legitimately behave during times of crisis (*āpad-dharma*).[84] It is in the Śvapaca legend that Viśvāmitra most plainly articulates the motivations behind his challenges to śāstraic norms throughout the Viśvāmitra cycle of legends—he is interested in maintaining and

[83] White focuses on the *Mahābhārata* telling, arguing that the Śvapaca legend demonstrates the sage's particularly post-Upaniṣadic role as a 'Kṣatriya-sage' foil to the orthodox 'Brahman-sage', through his associations with the impure category of the Śvapaca (White 1992). White does not take up the *Devībhāgavata's* version in his analysis.
[84] Adam Bowles has discussed the relationship between this *saṁvāda* and *varṇa*, noting that "the *saṁvāda* of Viśvāmitra and the *śvapaca* is meant as a demonstration of *vijñāna-bala* [the power of (dharmic) discernment], and consequently instructs the king on the intrinsic and privileged relationship between brāhman sages and *dharma*" (Bowles 2004, 3).

perfecting his body.[85] In this vein, it is also apparent that the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* are deliberately producing a narrative space in which not only do Brahmans bend the normative injunctions that bind them, but where an outcaste, within his domestic space, articulates a dharmic voice. The *Mahābhārata*'s Viśvāmitra-centered focalization celebrates the sage's resistance to this dharmic voice, and his construction of a new *āpad-dharma*, while the *Devībhāgavata's* later, Śvapaca-centered focalization constructs an authoritative outcaste voice—one that is then immediately and performatively juxtaposed with the outcaste king Triśaṅku.

The earlier *Mahābhārata* telling places Viśvāmitra's dogmeat-theft within the context of a cosmological history—the legend is told as having taken place during the changing of *yugas*, "at the conjunction of the Treta and Dvāpara ages, long ago"(*Mbh* 12.139.13).[86] Its *yugānta* (end-of-the-*yuga*) motif offers a parallel to the main *Mahābhārata* narrative, set at the juncture between Dvāpara and Kali *yugas*. Through this resonance of motifs, the *Mahābhārata* uses this legend to address the questions of post-catastrophic *dharma* that emerge from the events of the main narrative—this is indeed one of the major tasks of the 'didactic' books such as the *Śānti Parvan*. The narrative comes as Yudhiṣṭhira asks Bhīṣma how a Brahman should behave "when the highest *dharma* has decayed, transgressed by the whole world; when the virtuous behave contrary to *dharma*, while the path of the wicked becomes *dharma*" (*Mbh* 12.139.1-2). This moral decay takes place "when boundaries are broken and those fixed in *dharma* become

[85] "This *ātman* of mine is a Brahman," claims Viśvāmitra in the *Śānti Parvan's* telling, "and it is also my friend. It is dear to me and the one thing that I worship the most in the world. Desirious of protecting it, I will steal this [meat], for I am not afraid of committing any vile acts" (*Mbh* 12.139.73).
[86] Indeed, the purāṇic dynastic chronologies make it highly implausible that Triśaṅku was king during the hypothetical transition between Treta and Dvāpara.

agitated; when the earth is tortured by kings who are thieves" (*Mbh* 12.139.2). It is no surprise that Bhīṣma responds with a story of Viśvāmitra, perhaps the quintessential boundary-breaker of epic literature. The *Devībhāgavata's* version does not place this legend within mythic time, and lacks the *yugānta* motif. However, its Śvapaca narrative is clearly related to the epic telling, and I suggest that the elimination of *yugānta* is a performative development in the *Devībhāgavata*. Such a model is supported by comparing these two to the *Brahma Purāṇa* version.[87]

The *Brahma Purāṇa* telling was composed earlier than the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (and perhaps earlier than the *Śānti Parvan* layer of the *Mahābhārata*), but presents a version of this legend that takes place neither at the end of a *yuga*, nor in a Śvapaca home, nor explicitly during the lifetime of Triśaṅku. Yet, it is recognizably a variant of the legend, since it involves Viśvāmitra's (almost) eating of dogmeat during famine, and Viśvāmitra's coercion of the divine will of Indra to make it rain. The *Brahma Purāṇa's* version supports the idea that the *Devībhāgavata* is closely retelling the *Mahābhārata* version. In other words, it seems likely that the composer of the *Devībhāgavata* had indeed known the *Śānti Parvan* version and perhaps not the *Brahma Purāṇa* version. However, due to his familiarity with the Triśaṅku, Hariscandra, and Śunaḥśepa legends—amidst which the Śvapaca legend appears—the composer felt obliged

[87] While describing the sacred sites along the Gautamī river, Brahmā tells what had once happened at a spot known as the Viśvāmitra *tīrtha* (*BrahmaP* 93.1-4). During a drought, seeing his students and family starving, the sage told his students to go and fetch whatever food they could find (*BrahmaP* 93.5-7). They returned with the meat of a dog. Viśvāmitra instructed them to cut and cook it using *mantras* and then first offered it to the gods (*BrahmaP* 93.8-11). As they were cooking the meat, Agni reported the crisis (*āpanna*) to the gods (*BrahmaP* 93.12-13), who persuaded Indra to take the form of a hawk (*śyena*) and steal the meat from the fire (*BrahmaP* 93.14). He did so, and Viśvāmitra angrily began to curse the thief (*BrahmaP* 93.15-16); then Indra changed the meat to nectar, but Viśvāmitra demanded the return of the dogmeat (*BrahmaP* 93.17-18). Indra tried to persuade him to take the pure nectar, but Viśvāmitra demanded nectar not just for himself but for everyone (*BrahmaP* 93.19-21). Indra then made it rain nectar, and Viśvāmitra, after offering it to the gods, ate it along with his students and family (*BrahmaP* 93.22-24).

to retell the Śvapaca legend in a way that made narratological sense, and this was done by placing Viśvāmitra's entry into the Caṇḍāla enclave and stealing dogmeat during the same famine in which Triśaṅku sustained the sage's wife and children, thereby eliminating the *yugānta* motif.

The description of the Caṇḍāla enclave is the second significant site of variation between the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* versions. Like the other Viśvāmitra legends, this one also maps the presupposed śāstraic categories onto storyworld domestic spaces—this time forming Brahman and Untouchable domesticities. In both the *Mahābhārata* and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇas* (but not in the *Brahma*), Viśvāmitra enters the Śvapaca's settlement outside of town (*Mbh* 12.139.27; *DBhP* 7.13.10). While it is not out of the ordinary to find the Śvapaca at the undefined margins of social space, as soon as the Viśvāmitra enters the Śvapaca home, *varṇa* hierarchy is dramatically reversed—it is the Śvapaca who now suddenly holds moral authority and power and whose voice speaks of proper *dharma* during their ensuing debate.[88] This reversal of hierarchy, I argue, is a consequence of movements across *varṇa*/domestic boundaries as Viśvāmitra penetrates Śvapaca domestic space, "acting like a thief" (*DBhP* 7.13.15).[89] Like the Triśaṅku legend, there is a movement into Caṇḍāla domestic space,

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[88] In the *Mahābhārata*, the Śvapaca's sudden (and violent) ascension to power is demonstrated when he wakes up: "'I lie awake, I am not asleep! You are dead!' he said, fiercely" (*Mbh* 12.139.43); Viśvāmitra, in fear, begs forgiveness and pleads that his life be spared. When he realizes who the thief is, the Śvapaca immediately assumes a tone of respect and falls at his feet. In the *Devībhāgavata*, the Śvapaca is respectful from the beginning, but in both versions he insists it is wrong for Viśvāmitra to take his meat, and a moral dialogue ensues.

[89] In the *Mahābhārata*, Viśvāmitra justifies this non-theft: "Since I am forcefully stealing from someone of a lower caste [*antavasana*], I do not see this as a crime of theft, and so I will steal this flesh" (*Mbh* 12.139.39).

and here the infiltrator is a 'sinful' Brahman—for Viśvāmitra is never called a Kṣatriya or *rājarṣi* in this legend (*Mbh* 12.139.50).

While in the *Mahābhārata*, the dogmeat is hanging on a line outside the house, the *Devībhāgavata* has Viśvāmitra enter into the Śvapaca's kitchen and steal a leg of "well-prepared" dogmeat from a cooking pot. This fleeting glimpse into the Śvapaca kitchen, I suggest, is not accidental. It creates a more intimate notion of Śvapaca domesticity (and a Brahman 'otherness') in which the Śvapaca may reasonably and calmly ask Viśvāmitra, "Who are you? How did you get into my house tonight? Tell me what you are going to do, and why you are opening my pots?" (*DBhP* 7.13.13). The narrative force of such a transgressive scene is indicated in the *Skanda Purāṇa's* later version, found in the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa*, as the sage's theft of dogmeat is connected to the power of another *tīrtha* in Hāṭakeśvara.[90]

The ethical debate that ensues between the two characters is the third major site of variation among the different versions of the Śvapaca narrative. For the *Mahābhārata* episode, entitled "Viśvāmitra-Śvapaca-saṁvāda," the *saṁvāda* (dialogue) between Viśvāmitra and the Śvapaca is the dharmic climax of the story: the discussion of how an upright individual may behave during crisis is the motivation for telling the legend. At first, Viśvāmitra admits that there has been a breach in *dharma* and that he is sinning,

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[90] For a comparative discussion of the *Skanda* and *Brahma Purāṇa* versions, see Kumar 1983, 89-91. The story itself in the *Skanda* is fascinating. When the twelve-year famine resulted on account of Indra's displeasure at Śantanu being crowned king of the Lunar dynasty instead of his older brother Devāpi, Viśvāmitra entered a Caṇḍāla's home and found dogmeat. He took it, prepared it, and cooked it, and offered it into the fire for the *pitṛs* (ancestors). As it entered the fire, Agni, the god of fire, disappeared from the earth, and entered into various locations—a bamboo grove, a *pīpala* tree, and finally a pond in the Hāṭakeśvara region, burning up all of the fauna in the lake. One frog somehow escaped and informed the gods, who appeased Agni by forcing Indra to make it rain. The site then became known as Vahni *tīrtha* (*SkandaP* 6.90, see Kumar 1983, 89-90).

asserting, “My breath is slowing down, my mind is being destroyed by hunger. Even though I am aware of my *svadharma*, I will still steal this dogmeat” (*Mbh* 12.139.48). Then, reminded by the Śvapaca that stealing dogmeat from a Caṇḍāla is “improper” (*Mbh* 12.139.54), and a prohibited action that would be destroy his *tapas*, Viśvāmitra gives a series of rationalizations that are alternatively Vedic and śāstraic. First, he makes a Vedic connection to the symbolism of the sacrifice: “A Kṣatriya’s *dharma* is that of Indra, and Agni’s is for Brahmans; my strength is the *brahman*-fire, and therefore I will eat this now, with hunger” (*Mbh* 12.139.60).[91] He then promises to atone for his sins through *tapas*, once the time of crisis has passed (*Mbh* 12.139.63). This portion of the *saṁvāda* presents Viśvāmitra’s *tapas* as a means of overcoming *varṇa* restrictions through *post facto* atonements, but it is clearly not a persuasive argument.

The Śvapaca then implores Viśvāmitra to reconsider, appealing to normative discourse: “Brahmans and Kṣatriyas are supposed to eat the five kinds of five-toed creatures, twice-born; if the *śāstras* hold any authority over you, do not set your mind on eating this” (*Mbh* 12.139.66).[92] This counter-normative situation of a Caṇḍāla explaining

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[91] The commentator Nīlakaṇṭha explains this connection of Agni and ‘*brahman*-fire’ (*brahmavahni*) as follows: “‘*brahman*’ means ‘Veda’, and this is itself the fire” (*Mbh Nīlakaṇṭha* 12.141.64). Nīlakaṇṭha means that Viśvāmitra is making a Vedic equation of Brahman (the *varṇa*), Agni (as a god and as fire), and *brahman* (as the power behind the Veda), all of which are characterized as being *sarva-bhuktva-rūpa*—“who bear the nature of eating everything” (*Mbh Nīlakaṇṭha* 12.141.64).

[92] Nīlakaṇṭha reminds us here: “In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we find the following passage: ‘Rāghava, the five five-nailed creatures are to be eaten by Brahmans and Kṣatriyas; the rabbit, the porcupine, the lizard, the turtle, and the rhinoceros is the fifth.’ Regarding the validity of both verses together, we have an exclusion of other possibilities, that is to say, a *parovidhi* or an exclusionary injunction. So taking into consideration ‘*pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ*,’ this sentence is not ordaining the eating of five-nailed creatures [i.e., it is not a *vidhi*]—this is clear on account of its being produced through emotion. It is also not ordaining a *niyama* [a specific rule]. This is due to the fact that there is no statement of invalidity with respect to the postulate that the eating of both five-nailed and non-five-nailed creatures is simultaneously valid. Therefore this sentence is ordaining a restriction regarding the eating of five-nailed creatures, and thus it is a *parisaṅkhyāvidhi* or exclusionary injuction. There are two types of this: *śrautī*, [based on the Veda], and *lakṣaṇikī* [secondarily derived]. In this case, ‘*atra hy eva avapanti* [Here they should be planted]’ is the

the proper *dharma* of flesh-eating to a (quasi-) Brahman is problematic for the epic,[93] and is countered by Viśvāmitra's reference to a purāṇic (historical) event, narrated in the *Mahābhārata* (1.66 and 3.103), when "Agastya, in fact, ate the *asura* Vātāpi because of his hunger" (*Mbh* 12.139.67).[94] Like *mimāṁsaka* degrees of authoritative proof (*pramāṇas*),[95] Viśvāmitra's counter-examples move successively from Vedic to *aitihasika* (historical) verbal authority, to a rationalization that is based on personal contextualized observation (*pratyakṣa*) and argument (*tarka*), and finally to inference (*anumāna*) as he admits that while it is ordinarily a crime for a Brahman to acquire or eat dogmeat, "in this case, since there is no violence or deception but only verbal censure, the act of eating does not seem like such a big deal [*na gariyas*]" (*Mbh* 12.139.84).[96] In the end, the Śvapaca is forced to give in to Viśvāmitra's demands, declaring, "If this is your motivation to eat, then [clearly] neither the Veda nor any other [noble] *dharma* compels you" (*Mbh* 12.139.85). Viśvāmitra then steals the meat, and, while he does not actually eat it in the *Mahābhārata's* telling, this act of penetrating the Śvapaca's domestic space and stealing his symbol—the dog—is parallel with his attempt of cow-theft in the *kāmadhenu* legend, acting as a thematic inversion. It also presents a thematic parallel

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Vedic injunction. However, the idea that '*pañca pañcanakhā bhakṣyāḥ*' is a secondary derivation has been discussed elsewhere" (*Mbh Nīlakaṇṭha* 12.141.70)

[93] For example, when the Śvapaca declares, "This grievous act will result in a downfall [in your *varṇa*], is what I am thinking. And so I, a low person, am censuring you, who are a Brahman," (*Mbh* 12.139.77), he is then reprimanded by Viśvāmitra, who reminds him, "Cows continue to drink the water even though the frogs are croaking; you have no authority over *dharma*, don't go praising yourself!" (*Mbh* 12.139.78).

[94] The Śvapaca, however, counters the applicability of Agastya's precedent: "Since that action (the eating of Vātāpi) was carried out by a *ṛṣi* wishing to benefit the Brahmans, he had the authority to eat" (*Mbh* 12.139.72). Viśvāmitra retorts with a slightly circular argument (*tarka*) that since he himself is a Brahman, he must therefore protect himself by eating the polluting dogmeat (12.139.73).

[95] For an analysis of *pramāṇas* in philosophy, see Potter 1963, 57-92, as cited in O'Flaherty 1984, 325. Doniger summarizes the hierarchy of *pramāṇas* as follows: "argument (*tarka*) is usually ranked below inference (*anumāna*); both are less reliable than direct perception [*pratyakṣa*] and verbal authority [*śabda*], and verbal authority generally outranks perception" (O'Flaherty 1984, 173).

[96] Nīlakaṇṭha explains that violence and deception are "the two indicators of *adharma*" (*Mbh Nīlakaṇṭha* 12.141.88).

with Triśaṅku, as Viśvāmitra forces Indra to consume polluting meat, just as he had forcefully thrust Triśaṅku's polluted body into his heaven.[97]

There are two questions of identity that emerge from this legend. First, the utterances of Vedic injuctions from the mouth of a Śvapaca, who presumably in normal circumstances is not even allowed to *hear* the Veda much less preach it, raises the question of whom the Śvapaca represents—indeed, we may ask, who *is* the Śvapaca? He is a rather stereotypical outcaste, apart from his knowledge of normative doctrine, and is referred to throughout the *Śānti Parvan* telling simply as "the Śvapaca," except twice he is called "Mātaṅga" (*Mbh* 12.139.47, 88). Though it is a generic *jāti* name, related to current-day Mangs,[98] the name is perhaps an allusion to the Mātaṅga whose story is told in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* immediately after the narratives of Viśvāmitra as an example of someone who is unsuccessful at using *tapas* to force his way into Brahmanhood.[99] Most intriguingly, "Mataṅga" (with a short 'a') is the name that Satyavrata Triśaṅku is given in the only mention of the legend in the *Mahābhārata*.[100]

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[97] When Viśvāmitra cooked the dogmeat he first made an offering to the deities using the "*aindrāgneya*" Vedic rite, and then "commenced the sacrifice for the gods and the *pitṛs*…having summoned the gods led by Indra, he gave each a portion (of the meat) in the course of the ritual" (*Mbh* 12.139.89). This line has been mistakenly translated by P. C. Roy as Viśvāmitra having eaten the meat.

[98] White has suggested that "Mātaṅgas presumably deal with elephants" (White 1991, 72).

[99] Or Mātaṅga may perhaps be a reference to the Mātaṅga of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the spiritual preceptor of uncertain caste who is the *guru* of Śabarī, the aged Rāma-devotee who dutifully has collected *bilva* fruit for Rāma's arrival during the *Āraṇyakāṇḍa*, and who becomes iconic of low-caste devotion to Rāma (*Rām* 3.70.13, see also Lutgendorf 2001, 124).

[100] As discussed above, his story is identical to Triśaṅku's. Viśvāmitra is described as "one whose wife, long ago during famine was rescued by the righteous *rājarṣi* Mataṅga, who had become a low-caste and after a long period of difficult austerities the great sage returned to his hermitage and created the river named Pārā where he himself gladly sacrificed for Mataṅga" (*Mbh* 1.65.31-33). In a verse not included in the critical edition, the manuscripts Dn, D_4, and S indeed call this king "Triśaṅku," asserting that Viśvāmitra "gave refuge to Triśaṅku, though struck down by his *guru*'s curse" (*Mbh* 1.598*). The D_4 and S manuscripts then further add: "Thinking, 'how will the *rājarṣi* Kauśika free him from this *brahmarṣi's* curse?' the gods destroyed the implements of his sacrifice, but that powerful lord created other sacrificial implements, and then the great ascetic led Triśaṅku to heaven" (*Mbh* 1.599*). This is one of the few

The more crucial question emerging from this story, however, is not about the identity of the Untouchable, but the identity of the sage: Who exactly *is* Viśvāmitra? At the end of the story, Bhīṣma summarizes exactly why he had told it in the first place: "In this way, a wise man whose spirit is great but is caught in the midst of adversity, and who still desires to live, assessing all the options, should, by all means necessary, rescue his wretched self [*dīnam ātmānam*]" (*Mbh* 12.139.92). In the chapter that follows, the *Śānti Parvan* goes on to situate this narrative in a political context, as Bhīṣma explains how a king should determine proper *dharma* through recourse to intellect, *śāstras*, and Brahmans, homologizing Viśvāmitra's stretching of Brahmanic norms in the legend to the realworld situation of how a king should balance śāstraic rules with worldly contingencies in ruling a kingdom. As Bowles has pointed out in his analysis of this legend and its subsequent political/religious contextualization in the *Śānti Parvan* (Bowles 2004), Viśvāmitra boundary-crossing behavior produces a new moral discourse that does not simply appeal to lawbooks but indeed forces itself into them.[101] That is, in a bit of circularity, this legend itself is the illustration to which śāstraic texts allude when giving proof for the legitimacy of *āpad-dharma*. The doctrine of *āpad-dharma* is particularly important for the *Mahābhārata*, Bowles notes, because it is trying to strike a balance between śāstraic *dharma*, the domain of Brahmans, and the king's "*realpolitik* attitude to restoring the kingdom to prosperity" (Bowles 2004, 19). Illustrating the

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instances where Viśvāmitra is called a "*rājarṣi*"—and may indicate this manuscript's awareness of the *Bālakāṇḍa*, where Viśvāmitra is explicitly a *rājarṣi*when he rescues Triśaṅku.

[101] Thus, in the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra*, we find the following injunction: "When someone facing death eats food given by anyone at all, he remains unsullied by sin, as the sky by mud" (*Manu* 10.104, Olivelle 2004, 187). As an example of such an occurrence, Manu explains that "Viśvāmitra, a man with a clear vision of what accords with and what is against the Law, when he was tormented by hunger, came to eat the rump of a dog, taking it from the hand of a Caṇḍāla" (*Manu* 10.108, Olivelle 2004, 187).

performativity of the epic and purāṇic subnarrative—that is, the realworld effects of storyworld maneuvers, the *Mahābhārata*'s Śvapaca legend both raises a counter-normative *artha*-centered questioning of *varṇa* through Viśvāmitra's behavior as well as a normative answer through the new śāstraic discourse of *āpad-dharma*.[102] It is a story that is particularly effective because it is the not-quite Brahman, not-quite Kṣatriya Viśvāmitra who steals the dogmeat. That is, in iconizing the boundary between Brahman and Kṣatriya, his actions become representative of the everyday balancing act between self-sustaining *artha* and normative *dharma*.

While the *Mahābhārata's* concern for applied ethics drives its telling, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* glosses over the debate between Viśvāmitra and the Śvapaca in two verses. The Śvapaca merely states, "Desiring heavens, a sage should not eat polluting foods. Seven lower castes have been proclaimed as untouchable [*agrāhya*] for a sage, on account of their activities" (*DBhP* 7.13.19).[103] Viśvāmitra replies, "You speak truly, *dharma*-knower. Your mind is pure, outcaste. Still, I am speaking about the subtle path of *dharma*; during a time of distress, respectful one, a person should always protect his own body. After committing sin, one should then perform atonement for purification" (*DBhP* 7.13.21-23).[104] The rest of the debate is absent, indicating a more axiomatic

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[102] I am suggesting here that the narrative functions as a space in which a dialogue is taking place between the *dharmaśāstras* and the epic, and the resolution is the discursive 'borderline' of *āpad-dharma*. Both *Manu* and the *Mahābhārata* are datable to the beginning of the Common Era (Olivelle 2004, xli, Hiltebeitel 2001), and both are written by Brahmans "intent on protecting the rights and privileges of their class" (Olivelle 2004, xlii), but they do not invoke the same voice in the discussion.

[103] Kane mentions that seven *antyajas* are enumerated in the *Atri-smṛti* (199), *Aṅgirasa-smṛti* (Jivanandana I: 554), and *Yama-smṛti* (33) (Kane 1990, vol 2: 70).

[104] While Dumont (Dumont 1980, 52-53), Ghurye (Ghurye 1932), and Kane (Kane 1990, vol. 2: 165-179) observe that untouchability is attested to in the earliest *śāstras*, only the *Devībhāgavata* explicitly denotes the Śvapaca's status as "untouchable" (*agrāhya*). The argument that all *antyajas* are naturally untouchable is a medieval development, according to Kane, who notes that in the *śāstras* only the Caṇḍāla was considered untouchable (*aspṛṣya*) (Kane 1990, vol. 2: 171).

understanding of the pollution/atonement process.[105] The variation in their usage of the term *saṅkara* (intermixture) to denote Viśvāmitra's transgression reveals a central interpretive difference between these two versions. In the *Mahābhārata*, the Śvapaca warns Viśvāmitra, "Knowing that this path is not condoned, do not create a *dharma-saṅkara* [intermixture of *dharma*]" (*Mbh* 12.139.56), while in the *Devībhāgavata*, he says, "Great Brahman, do not let the sin of *varṇa-saṅkara* [*varṇa* intermixture] fall upon you" (*DBhP* 7.13.21). Thus, while the *Mahābhārata* is mixing together dharmic rules to produce a 'new' *āpad-dharma* through the powerful character of Viśvāmitra, the *Devībhāgavata* uses the figure of the Śvapaca in this narrative to produce a new sociological icon parallel to the Caṇḍāla king Triśaṅku, who, despite the mixed status of his body, is a loyal and dedicated devotee of the Goddess and a loyal and dedicated protector of Viśvāmitra's wife and children. He is, in effect, made to be a 'noble savage.' In order to legitimate the morality of the outcaste voice and perhaps to open a normative window into the 'pure' mind of the untouchable, and above all because it 'fits' in a historical sense, the *Devībhāgavata* juxtaposes the Śvapaca legend with the Triśaṅku story.

The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* as supplemental to the epics and early *purāṇas* (Doniger 1993), attempts to reorganize and do 'new' things with the old narrative traditions it has inherited. In juxtaposing a powerful Śvapaca voice and the 'noble savage' Triśaṅku, this *purāṇa* produces a profoundly moving scene by having Viśvāmitra visit Triśaṅku, instead of the other way around:

[105] For a lengthy analysis of *prāyaścitta* (atonement), see Kane 1990, vol. 4: 57-152).

> Consoling his beloved, Kauśika, the knower of the highest truth, deliberated on how he could end the king's misery. Pondering this, the sage went to where, the king Triśaṅku, miserable, was living in a hut, appearing like a Śvapaca. Seeing the sage approaching, the king was astonished. Grasping the king's hands that had quickly fallen at his feet like staffs, he raised up the king. The great twice-born [Viśvāmitra] then said these consoling words to him: "I will do whatever you desire, tell me what you'd like me to do."(*DBhP* 7.13.51-56)

The powerful image of Viśvāmitra physically entering into the Caṇḍāla enclave, and then touching and raising the king's untouchable (*agrāhya*) body is undoubtedly symbolic of his role in this narrative as a whole—as a compassionate, 'New Brahmanic' voice that challenges existing *varṇa*-based norms, who can do the impossible, and who brings the downtrodden and dispossessed a way out.

Kunal Chakrabarti has demonstrated how 'Bengal *purāṇas*' like the *Devībhāgavata* became templates of assimilation through which medieval Brahmanic culture incorporated marginalized forms of religiosity as maneuvers of domination (Chakrabarti 2001). While Chakrabarti presents a compelling analysis of the localized politics of *purāṇa*-building, his approach de-emphasizes the relationships these new *purāṇas* were obliged to assume with the genre itself, and as a result, their project of retelling older purāṇic narratives. If the primary objective of the eleventh- or twelfth-century *Devībhāgavata* is to legitimate a 'new' religiosity (*devī-bhakti*) through a 'counter-Bhāgavatization' of its elements—that is, utilizing the techniques through which the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* legitimates Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, but at the same time contesting its primacy (Brown 1990, 33)[106]—the Satyavrata/Triśaṅku narrative, in conjunction with the Śvapaca legend and the lengthy tellings of the Śunaḥśepa and Hariścandra legends that

[106] This is indeed the simultaneous "lineage and deviation" (Doniger 1993, 32) that Doniger observes in the composition of the *Devībhāgavata*.

immediately follow it, creates a narrative space in which the astonishingly counter-normative power (*tapas*) of a well-known, boundary-crossing sage is homologized to the power of the Goddess. Furthermore, since both kings are Goddess-devotees—first Triśaṅku and then Hariścandra—the *Devībhāgavata's* telling of these stories links older religious notions of initiation (*dīkṣā*) and uprightness (*satya*) to the 'new' construct of *devī-bhakti*. That is to say, the *Devībhāgavata* is not trying to make sense of *devī-bhakti*, but to translate the older notions of *tapas*, *dīkṣā*, and *satya* into its counter-normative discourse.

IV. From performativity to performance: Triśaṅku in nāradīya kīrtan

While describing the relationship between literature and Austin's "performatives," Jonathan Culler remarks that "literature is not frivolous pseudo-statements but takes its place among the acts of language that transform the world, bringing into being the things that they name" (Culler 1997, 96). If the Viśvāmitra legends create an epic and purāṇic space where the norms of *varṇa* are challenged and a counter-normative voice is articulated, then it is the Triśaṅku and Śvapaca legends that quite literally bring this storyworld 'down to earth,' through the sage's *pratisṛṣṭi* and his rewriting of *sāstras*. If Viśvāmitra can cross *varṇa* boundaries, then, potentially, so can you or I. If Viśvāmitra may bend the rules of Brahmanhood, then, potentially, so may you or I. If a Caṇḍāla can enter heaven through his help, then, potentially, so may you or I. The Triśaṅku narratives speak of a world in which such boundary-crossings take place, but the manner in which this story is told—its performance—controls how its audience homologizes storyworld events to realworld contexts.

That is to say, telling the Triśaṅku narrative demands an interpretation. Since the texts in which they are found present themselves as ageless and all-encompassing, any performance—oral or textual—necessarily speaks of an older world that has long ceased to exist. The performer's greatest task is to to produce continuities for his audience between the past and the present, and this is precisely what happens in *nāradīya kīrtan*.[107] Just as Vaman Kolhatkar in December 2000 ultimately had to imagine what a Caṇḍāla home might have been like during the Treta *yuga* and then reconstruct a scene that his Puneri audience could understand, so too did Nīlakaṇṭha in the seventeenth century, so too did the compilers of the twelfth-century *Devībhāgavata*, and so, too, did Vālmīki. The question we are asking here is not one of evolution—"How did Vālmīki's Triśaṅku change into Kolhatkar-*buwā's*?"—but one of method—"How did Kolhatkar perform the story of Triśaṅku for his twentieth-century Nārad Mandir audience?"

Along with this question of presentation is one of reception: how should the audience receive Triśaṅku? Each teller, reteller, referrer, and commentator of this legend has asked such a question. For Vālmīki the answer lay in the religious aesthetics of *tapas* while for the early *purāṇas* it seems to converge around the Vedic/tantric notion of *dīkṣā*, as well as a political change of priestly patronage. In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the narrative's significance is physically located in sacred *tīrthas*, while the *Devībhāgavata's* attention turns to the Goddess and the Gāyatrī *mantra* as Satyavrata's savior as well as his *devī-*

[107] Gajanan Koparkar-*buwā*, a well-known and long-lived Puneri *kīrtankār* voices the *kīrtankār's* dilemma of reconciling the śāstraic world of purāṇic narratives, asking "Is it possible to order one's life according to the order of these texts [the *dharmaśāstras*]?" (Koparkar 1982, 37) His vociferously conservative answer is "Yes," and involves a return to pre-Independence 'Hindu Law' and a strictly anti-Muslim and anti-Christian platform (see Koparkar 1982, 158-173).

bhakti that harnesses her power. In Kolhatkar's *kīrtan*, the purāṇic legend was translated into the contemporary devotional context of Marathi *sant* literature.[108]

After telling the *kāmadhenu* legend, on December 5, 2000, and after having presented the *kośa* theory as an analytic framework for understanding the Viśvāmitra cycle, Vaman Kolhatkar announced that from the next day, "we will see how he uses his *tapas* to purify his *kośas*, one-by-one" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 5, 2000).[109] For the next four days at Nārad Mandir, December 6-9, 2000, Kolhatkar-*buwā* presented the Triśaṅku and Śvapaca legends, telling them more or less as they appear in the *Devībhāgavata*, but with enough transformations to illustrate how the *kīrtankār*, as an authoritative and careful selector of texts, tries simultaneously to maintain a fidelity to the needs of the text, to his audience, and to himself.[110] Though, like the Satyavatī and *kāmadhenu* legends, Kolhatkar again supplemented his main narrative with lengthy substories—purāṇic narratives such as the story of Dhruva, medieval *bhakti* narratives of Jñāneśvar and his family, or the more esoteric stories of Macchindra Nāth and Gahīni Nāth—this process of negotiation became most apparent in how he synthesized the Satyavrata and Triśaṅku legends into a chronological, historical narrative.

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[108] The *kīrtankār* has generally been regarded as a translator between the religious traditions of *karma*, *bhakti*, and *adhyātma* and the 'unlearned' (*aśīkṣit*) common populace (Koparkar 1982, Pathak 1980), the *kīrtan* itself being thought of as public "education through entertainment" (Pathak 1980, 223). But clearly the *kīrtan* audience is not as unlearned as is claimed, and we have seen previously that *kīrtankārs* must negotiate with their audiences regarding what may appropriately be told from 'Nārad's space' (*nāradācī gādī*—a folk metaphor designating the *kirtankār's* performance space).

[109] Kolhatkar's *kośa* theory provides an ingenious, Vedāntic ordering of the legends. The Triśaṅku, Śunaḥśepa, and Menakā episodes constitute further and further "cleansings" of Viśvāmitra's more and more subtle bodies—the *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, and *vijñānamaya kośas*—after the initial cleansing of his *annamaya kośa* after the *kāmadhenu* story—until finally, when his *tapas* spills over and begins to burn the entire cosmos, he has cleansed even his *ānandamaya kośa* attaining the status of *brahmarṣi*.

[110] As Kolhatkar assured his audience, his *kīrtans* were authentically taken from the *Devībhāgavata* and the epics (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

The plot of Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* was identical to the purāṇic telling: first Satyavrata commits his sins, then helps out Viśvāmitra's family while the sage is stealing dogmeat. Then, cursed by Vasiṣṭha to be Triśaṅku, he ascends to heaven through Viśvāmitra's assistance. However, Kolhatkar's Viśvāmitra-centered *kīrtan* 'remixed' the narrative sequence. He began on December 6, 2000, with the Śvapaca legend, then moved to the Satyavrata legend as a flashback told to Viśvāmitra by his wife, and finally to a straightforward narration of the Triśaṅku legend. In Kolhatkar's telling, Viśvāmitra first left his wife Satī and their three children in Ayodhyā and went to the Himālayas and to his sister, the river Kauśikī, to perform *tapas* in order to gain Brahmanhood (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000). Then, instead of switching to the developments in Ayodhyā, Kolhatkar kept his narrative lens fixed closely on Viśvāmitra's *tapas*:

> Ever so slowly, his *samādhi* ('spiritual trance') began to subside. After coming down from his *samādhi*, he realized he was hungry. As long as you exist in the realm of food, there is hunger. Quickly he performed his *sandhyā* (evening ablutions), and thought to himself that first he should go to a nearby village and beg for alms. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

After a skillful description of the horrors of the twelve-year famine that had beset the land, Kolhatkar described Viśvāmitra's entry into the Caṇḍāla part of town.[111] Narrating

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[111] Scholars of *kīrtan* have emphasized the aesthetic value of extemporaneous descriptive narration in the *uttararaṅga* (Koparkar 1982, 57).Kolhatkar-*buwā's* narrative flourishes came in his heart-wrenching details of the famine: "Young children, they are being tightly bound at the waist, in the hopes that, one way or another, the pangs that course through their intestines when they get hungry might be suppressed. That was how it was, no one was able to do anything about it. Even rich people were going about wondering, 'Can we get grain from here? Can we get grain from there? Because certainly you can't eat gold coins, you can't eat jewels, and certainly you can't eat *paiṭhaṇī sāḍīs*. [A particularly expensive type of silk produced in the Maharashtrian town of Paithan.]'...People were even selling their children for money, thinking, 'If I got four *āṇās* [bits] then at least I may live for a couple of days. Then if it rains it might turn green again.' ...In this fashion, 'Save me, save, me save me!' was the only cry left for them. 'Save us, save us, save us—*trāhi*, *trāhi*—someone save us!'...Viśvāmitra thought, 'I have come here to beg for food, but they're begging from me'" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)! Note the switching between present and past habitual tenses as a way to emphasize the continuous nature of the horrors Viśvāmitra witnesses.

the sage's discovery of the dogmeat*,* Kolhatkar switched into present tense to increase the gravity of his narration:

> A rooster is calling out, "Coo! Coo! Coo! Coo! Coo! Coo!" Huh? A rooster is crowing from the south? There is a large clearing there, and in that place, a marketplace has been laid out. There is a yard, and a market arranged within it. On the other side there are corrugated tin huts, and there are people going in and out. They are entering, exiting. If you look in one direction, two logs are bound together. Two logs thatched together, and a third for support. The same is on the other side. On both sides, two propped up logs thatched together, and a rope strung out between them. And on that line, various types of foods are hung out to dry. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

Then, explained Kolhatkar, "Viśvāmitra's Kṣatriyahood stirred inside him" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000), and he then made his nighttime plot to jump the Śvapaca fence, steal the dogmeat, and appease his hunger. Here, Kolhatkar clearly presented Viśvāmitra as an outsider Brahman (with lingering traces of Kṣatriyahood), powerless, hungry, without home, and without substantial clothing or wealth.[112]

The description of the Caṇḍāla, whom Kolhatkar-*buwā* called a "hunter," on the other hand, is worth a detailed translation:

> And a bit after nightfall, that hunter came by, and, "Hey, woman, aren't you paying attention?" he yelled as he came. Four dogs were behind him. His frame is six 'feet tall, dark black, wearing a loin cloth down below, just one cloth. He's wrapped it around himself like a *towel. He has a red piece of cloth on his shoulder. This is what he's like. He's placed a black dot on his forehead, nothing like this around his neck [Kolhatkar pointed to his flower garland]. Iron—on his body is iron jewelry. Looking like this, with giant club in hand, he came there yelling out, "Whatcha doin' inside the house?"[113] He goes inside. He went to the water, washed his hands and feet. And, saying, "Oh! My working man has come home!" she's running towards him. Then,

[112] Consider Kolhatkar's description of Viśvāmitra's descent from the Himālayas: "There was nothing left on his body, only skin and bones. His beard has grown long, his hair has grown long, his nails are grown out, and his body is radiant as if it is reflecting the sun. He doesn't even have ascetic's sandals on his feet. He's holding a staff and a coarse blanket is wrapped about him. He has taken a begging vessel for getting alms, and then he went down" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

[113] This is my attempt to translate the coarse, '*gāvaṭhī*' (village) Marathi which Kolhatkar-*buwā* used to voice the words of the Śvapaca and his wife.

> she gave him something to dry off his hands. He said, "*Heṭ!* You were so damn late that I just used the clothes on my body to wipe my hands!" Then he went inside and sat down, and she placed a water pot near him. Then, after a bit of telling stories, they ate whatever food they had. Some grain had been laid outside for the night, and he decided to sleep on the grain, since there is of course that stuff that had been laid out to dry, isn't it? Anyone could steal it.[114] (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

Kolhatkar's Śvapaca is quite a bit different from the purāṇic one. On the level of language, the *kīrtankār* is translating the Sanskrit *Devībhāgavata* legend for his contemporary Marathi-speaking audience, and many elements such as the Śvapaca's appearance are clearly motivated by the purāṇic text. At the same time, Kolhatkar produces a scene in which the normative social roles of the Brahman and the Caṇḍāla are reversed—the (new) Brahman Viśvāmitra is the outsider, begging for alms, while the insider Śvapaca and his wife engage in a bit of ordinary domestic life—coming home after work, washing his hands and feet, eating and trading stories with his wife before bedtime—not far removed from the *kīrtankār's* own daily domestic routine. The Śvapaca is domesticized, but in an inverted fashion. While the *buwā* maintains the sociolinguistic exteriority of this Caṇḍāla couple's home through their *gāvaṭhī* Marathi register, this representation of the Śvapaca enclave as a *home* enhances the transgressive nature of Viśvāmitra's theft. The portrayal of the hunter as a decent (but rude) family man also helps to reinforce the essence of the *Mahābhārata* version, that inside the outcaste's home, the outcaste is in charge. More to the point, Kolhatkar's portrayal locates the

[114] This addition of grain demonstrates the transformations that performance brings, for it is clearly an innovation in the *buwā's* imagined country scene. For if there is grain available, why would Viśvāmitra insist on stealing dogmeat, especially when confronted with the Śvapaca's dharmic arguments?

legitimacy of the Śvapaca's rebukes of Viśvāmitra's behavior not simply in the fact that he is saying śāstraic things, but the fact that he is saying them in his own *home*.[115]

While we have seen that the *Devībhāgavata* juxtaposes the Śvapaca's domesticity with Triśaṅku's new Caṇḍāla home, the *buwā* juxtaposed this scene with Viśvāmitra's home in the next day's *kīrtan* (December 7, 2000). Kolhatkar's narration of Viśvāmitra's homecoming, without having eaten the dogmeat, creates a brilliant parallel with the Śvapaca's homecoming:[116]

> Viśvāmitra went to Ayodhyā. His wife saw him coming. She ran up to meet him, took some warm water, and washed his feet. She dried them with the end of her *sāḍī*. She took his hands and led him inside. She wiped off his sweat with her *sāḍī*-end—he'd come on foot, hadn't he? She seated him on the chair. Having seated him, she brought him a piece of jaggery and some water. Whatever fruit might be at home, a banana, and so on—she brought them there are left them for him. Fanning him, she went and stood behind him and his children came running up to him, crying "Bābā, Bābā! [Daddy, Daddy!]" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 7, 2000)

The timely and polite service of Viśvāmitra's devoted wife is in marked contrast with the turbulent and uncouth Śvapaca home, where the foul-mouthed wife coming too late to serve her husband. Untouchable family life in Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* becomes a somewhat fractured imitation of Brahman domesticity, and our peek into the Śvapaca home is ultimately exactly that—a glance from afar through Brahman eyes into a different world.

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[115] In fact, Kolhatkar's rendition of the dharmic dialogue between Viśvāmitra and the Śvapaca to my surprise eliminated any explicit mention of the *śāstras*, though of course what the Śvapaca argued was in fact demonstrably dharmic. Instead, he argues dogmeat-eating to be an aspect of Śvapaca identity—that is, as intrinsic to Śvapaca domestic life. Says the Śvapaca: "Only *our* type of people are supposed to eat dog meat. It's called a Śvapaca. You have to become a Brahman, by your *tapas*. You are not able to eat this. Also, it's the left leg. And furthermore, it's the shank. It has nails protruding. It's incredibly non-dharmic. It is impossible for me to agree to this" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

[116] Kolhatkar specifically insisted that Viśvāmitra did not eat the untouchable's dogmeat: "he didn't eat it—this story is in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, and it is also told in the *Mahābhārata*. In it, there is no mention that he ate it. When the rains came, his thoughts suddenly changed" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 7, 2000).

Compared to his own home, the hunter's house remains for Viśvāmitra—and for the high-caste *kīrtankār* and his audience—an exotic and unenterable 'other' space.

Within Viśvāmitra's Brahman domestic space, we then hear another 'other' voice. It is Viśvāmitra's wife who explains to her husband what had happened while he was away. The plight of Viśvāmitra's family during famine is again more or less identical to the *Devībhāgavata's* telling, but focalized on the (Brahman) mother, emphasizing the suffering of having to sell her own child in order to survive. The *buwā*'s introduction of this feminine voice is very much intentional, for as he explained to the audience, he wanted to investigate the question: "What is the domestic situation of a man gone to do *tapascaryā*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 7, 2000)? He explained further:

> Viśvāmitra had closed off all these fetters of *māyā*. It's not such a simple thing—these are little tiny kids. What wrong have they done? If you look at reality, they have done nothing wrong. But what happens, happens. If, because of their innocence I kept one leg in *saṁsār* [worldly life], I will never become Viśvāmitra. I'll stay just *Vamnyā*.[117] *Tapas* is not such an easy thing. And [to describe] how the burden falls on the woman of the house, and how she has to cope with this, that's why she's saying this. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 7, 2000)

This change of voice may have resulted from the *kīrtan's* Viśvāmitra-centered focalization, but the *buwā* was interested in articulating the wife's perspective regarding the practical consequences of engaging in spiritual pursuits. While the *kīrtan* does not a present a *feminist* voice as other folk genres might, Kolhatkar consciously juxtaposed his character's female voice with his very much masculine narrative voice.[118] In doing so, he was able to raise quite contemporary questions:

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[117] 'Vamnyā' is a diminutive form of the *kīrtankār's* first name Vaman.
[118] For women-centered studies of feminist approaches to South Asian folklore, see Ramanujan 1991b, Raheja and Gold 1994, and Flueckiger 1996; Appadurai, Korom, and Mills 1991 also offers a useful collection of articles asking gender-related questions of popular traditions.

> She said, “My lord husband, the doings of God are very strange. This boy [Satyavrata], this boy had a tendency for mischief, burdened with youthfulness. He *has* it, I mean, now.” She’s telling this to her husband. “He’s in a criminal (*guṇḍa*) condition. His criminal tendencies grew a bit, and what did he do? There was the wedding of a Brahman’s daughter and they were taking that girl there like this—to the place of her marriage. They were taking that girl to the marriage hall, and he thrust his chariot in their way and grabbed hold of that Brahman girl. He threw her in his chariot, and ran off with her. And after this, there was an uproar, a clamor: ‘What’s the meaning of this? This type of behavior, from a prince?’ A great protest arose.”
>
> Princes *do* do this. When I was in Delhi, the prince at that time was Indira Gandhi’s son.[119] He would always do this. [Murmurs in the audience.] I have firsthand experience—I met people there, upon whose daughters these kinds of things happened! But this king was not one to cover these sorts of things up. This is the difference. Tendencies are universal, but the tendency to straighten out these tendencies—these must be ripe and readied. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 8, 2000)

The *buwā’s* feminine voice does not last for long. While Kolhatkar began with Satī’s flashback, his narration quickly became infused with his own personal political commentary (about Indira Gandhi’s Satyavrata-like son Sanjay) and eventually fell back into his own voice, telling the *Mahābhārata’s* Gālava story.[120] In fact, even though it was supposed to be Viśvāmitra’s wife’s flashback, Kolhatkar employed an omniscient third-person point of view throughout the rest of the Satyavrata legend, until finally returning to the voice of Viśvāmitra’s wife as she tells her husband that Triśaṅku is now living in a Caṇḍāla enclave at the edge of town (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 8, 2000).

I suggest that Kolhatkar-*buwā*’s fluctuation of voice is not a flaw of performance but a deliberate *kīrtan* technique whereby interpretation is mixed into simple narration.

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[119] This alludes to Sanjay Gandhi’s reputation for such sexual liaisons.

[120] Kolhatkar explained: “We find references to Gālava *ṛṣi* in many places in the *purāṇas*. His name became Gālava because of that rope tied around his neck. He then did *tapascaryā*, and then...there is much more about him. There is an extensive *kathā* in the *Mahābhārat*—how Garuḍ helped him, his relationship with Yayāti, and the connection with those, you know, one thousand horses. Like this one, it is a great, wondrous *kathā*. This Gālava, he was then still young—later he did this *tapascaryā*” (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 8, 2000).

The *ākhyān* (narrative) in a *nāradīya kīrtan* functions not only as the telling of a story but also as a historical enterprise in which the text-oriented *kīrtankār* analyzes the multiple textual traditions he regards as equally true and reconstructs a single, linear narrative.[121] The performer's voice remains intentionally distinct from his characters, frequently slipping in and out of the performance, remaining in a state of criticality. It is this literary tension between storyworld and realworld—essentially a tension between the ancient and the contemporary—that fuels *nāradīya kīrtan*, a genre of folk narrative most dramatically marked by a separation of story (*uttararaṅga*) from discourse (*purvaraṅga*).[122] The task of the *kīrtankār* is to help his audience resolve the tension between *sant* literature and purāṇic texts through the construction of homologies between narrative events and religious discourse (Chapter Two), but where precisely does this homological projection takes place? And how exactly does the homology work? On one level, it works as a translation, identifying events from the storyworld with those in the religious world of *bhakti*. Kolhatkar actually explained this process as intrinsic to the *purāṇas* and their traditional performance in temples, and his ideas are worth exploring further.

To open his first Triśaṅku *kīrtan*, Kolhatkar asked the provocative question: "Why did the *sants* come into being in Maharashtra?" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000). His answer: "purāṇic literature."

> In each of our villages, both large and small, in every village, be it small or large, in the temples from three to five in the afternoon, *purāṇas* would be recited. Even

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[121] This is where Kolhatkar and a handful of other more scholarly *kīrtankārs*—the late Koparkar-*buwā* and Kavishvar-*buwā*, for example—deviate from more folkloric, '*sampradāya*' *kīrtankārs*, who would not necessarily utilize Sanskrit texts but traditional sources for their narratives: the poems and storylines they have received from their fathers and *gurus* (see Koparkar 1982, 104, 186).

[122] This is indeed the key structural difference between *nāradīya* and *vārkarī* varieties of *kīrtan*. The structural separation, according to Yashwant Pathak, was most clearly defined in the regulatory writings of the Marathi *sant* Eknāth (Pathak 1980, 30-36).

in Pune, up until my childhood there were almost 30 to 35 *paurāṇiks* in Pune, like our Gurjar-*gurujī*. And their only occupation was to recite the *purāṇas* in the many temples of Pune. The knowledge contained within these *purāṇas*, is boundless—in the *purāṇas* there are geography, astronomy, and the issues that I have been discussing with you; there are discussions of *sattva-rajas-tamas*, there is *yoga*. There is that which you always call *bhakti*, God's *bhakti*. There are many different types of histories, many types of stories about kings, the stories from the *Rāmāyaṇ* and the *Mahābhārat*. In the *purāṇas*, there are at least ten subjects that even today are not taught in our universities—and this list is given in the *Bhāgavata*. And in our temples, from ancient times these *purāṇas* used to be told for free—and anyone, Brahman, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra, Caṇḍāla—anyone could come and sit. Be they women, men, young children, there was no prohibition. And each of us has witnessed these stories in our youth. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

The temporal and social representation of these purāṇic readings—"in each of our villages," "from three to five in the afternoon," "anyone could come and sit," "up until my childhood," "in our youth"—represents purāṇic recitation as continuous, natural, and, as we shall see, essential to public traditional culture. At the same time, Kolhatkar situates purāṇic recitation within a specifically Pune-centered geography:

I have listened to many *purāṇas* when I was young—they were told in our Dharmacaitanya.[123] There was a *purāṇa* at Khunyā Muralīdhar temple, there was a *purāṇa* at Tuḷśībāg.[124] I'm telling you something local here. *purāṇas* took place at two temples in Tuḷśībāg, and there was one *purāṇa* at Beḷbāg. Even now you can find *paurāṇiks*, and the few *paurāṇiks* that are still here tell them according to their own strengths—but not to worry about that, times have changed. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

Connecting the *purāṇas* onto the temples of Pune, Kolhatkar reinforced the *nāradīya* notion that until its recent state of demise, Puneri religious identity—and indeed, *bhakti* itself—naturally and traditionally stemmed from the *purāṇas*. But Kolhatkar's own

[123] A temple built by Vaman Kolhatkar's father, the *rāṣṭrīya kīrtankār* V. S. Kolhatkar, inside the courtyard of their home in Sadashiv Peth, Pune, and which is still functional, though not at all frequented by the general public in the same force as it was in the 1950s or '60s.
[124] Khunyā Muralīdhar is a Kṛṣṇa temple in Sadashiv Peth, Pune, so named ("murderous Flute-bearer" temple) due to a murder that had taken place in the intersection directly across from the temple entrance. Tuḷaśībāg is one of the oldest Puneri Śaiva temples, located within the famous street market of the same name in Guruwar Peth in Pune.

point of emphasis is that it did *not* stem from the Vedas. Indeed, Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s discourse on the *purāṇas* sought to project these texts as the authoritative public source for knowledge as opposed to the Vedas:

> You can only learn things through the *purāṇas*, you cannot learn things through the Veda...I have gone through that course, and I am not lying to you. The Veda won't teach you a thing. The *purāṇas* do. Trust me. I have indeed learned the Vedas, you may already know this, you see. That which is the *standard Vedic study—twelve years is *standard—I had completed these twelve years of Vedic study at the service of my *guru*. "The Veda contains knowledge" [they say.] These days they'll teach anything in schools and in college! What do these people know? They're literally monkeys! [They say] "You didn't teach it to women, you didn't teach it to those folks." What rubbish they speak! The Veda is not a subject to study in order to gain knowledge. It is *specific. It is *specific. The Veda is extremely *specific. It is like this: Allarakha plays *tablā*.[125] His *tablā* has never been taught in a school—how could he teach it? It is *specific. For that (*tablā*) you need to be born that way. The Vedic knowledge that is taught in our *gurukuḷ* [traditional school] is *specific. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

Essentializing the difference between the *purāṇas* and Vedas as one between general and "specific" knowledge, Kolhatkar's defense of the Brahman male exclusivity of the Vedas was simple—they are simply not an appropriate source for worldly knowledge. The *purāṇas*, on the other hand, are.[126] The *purāṇas* (and the stories they contain) lie in between the *mantras* of the Vedas and the *abhaṅgas* of the Marathi *sants*, and they have relationships to both. On one hand, the *purāṇas* characterize themselves as Vedic *upabṛmhaṇa*—as augmentations to the Vedas. At the same time, Kolhatkar argued that *sant* literature is supplemental to the *purāṇas*: "taking into consideration the stories

[125] Allarakha was the leading proponent of the Delhi *gharāṇa* of classical North Indian *tablā*, and, because he lived in Bombay until his death in 2000, has been an enormous influence on the Maharashtrian classical music scene.
[126] Kolhatkar explained this in detail: "That knowledge that a man should obtain, through the power of which he is able to survive in the world, and is able to contemplate the world, life, and the higher existence (*paramātmā*), these concepts are indeed located in the Veda, but they are told in the *purāṇas*, in languages that people can understand. These topics are not outside the Veda, but you won't understand them if you study the Veda—you only understand them through the *purāṇas*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

within the *purāṇas*, the proclamations, the global structures described in the *purāṇas*, with these in mind, the *sants* have composed later literature" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).[127] The *purāṇas*—and *kīrtan* performances of purāṇic *ākhyāns*—therefore act as the 'middle step' between the Vedas and *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is what the *kīrtan* audience comes to Nārad Mandir to do, and why they so diligently study the Marathi literature of the *sants*; the Vedas are what Kolhatkar-*buwā* knows best, and what the audience commonly regards as the highest authority of contemporary Hindu religion.

Throughout this dissertation, we have seen that Kolhatkar-*buwā* derives his authority as a *kīrtankār* from three distinct sources—first, the legacy of his father, second, the "original" (*mūḷ*) texts which he uses to support his preaching, and third, his person—his appearance, his conduct, his education, and the śāstraic conservatism of his home. This may indeed be generalized to all *nāradīya kīrtankārs*—lineage, scholarship, reputation, and character are what ultimately compel the audience to engage with the *kīrtankār's* discourse.[128] The paramount importance that Kolhatkar-*buwā* places on both Sanskrit texts and his *vaidika* way of life emerged as he explained Viśvāmitra's relationship to the Gāyatrī *mantra* in the *pūrvaraṅga* during the third day (December 9, 2000).

The Gāyatrī figured into Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s *kīrtan* in two ways: in deified form as the Goddess worshipped by Triśaṅku, and as the *mantra* invoked by Viśvāmitra as he

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[127] Kolhatkar suggested that *sant* literature is directly built on the *purāṇas*: "Through these texts they received knowledge, and that is why we have Cokhā Meḷā Cāmbhār, Rohīdās Cāmbhār, Gorā Kumbhār. Yes or no? We have Narahari Sonār, Jñāneśvar, Sopān, Muktābāī, etc. etc.—take any name you wish—they all took their subjects from the *purāṇas*. Thus in Tukāram's *abhaṅgas*, or in Eknāth's *abhaṅgas*, there are a thousand references to the *purāṇas*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).
[128] Koparkar argues that the character (*vyaktimatva*) of a *kīrtankār* involves six spheres of development: 'physical character,' 'knowledge,' 'drive' (*dhyeya*), 'reputation,' 'conduct,' and 'lineage (*sampradāya*)' (Koparkar 1982, 29).

forced Triśaṅku into heaven. While Kolhatkar-*buwā* relied on the *Rāmāyaṇa* for his methodical description of the sage's counter-creation,[129] he followed the *Devībhāgavata* in ascribing Viśvāmitra's power to the Gāyatrī *mantra*.[130] According to Kolhatkar, the Vedic and therefore inaccessible Gāyatrī (a '*veda-mantra*'), originally 'seen' by Viśvāmitra, becomes represented through the '*purāṇa-mantra*' of the Triśaṅku legend. In fact, the Triśaṅku legend is really "the divine story of Viśvāmitra's Gāyatrī *mantra*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000). That is, it demonstrates the sacred power behind the syllables in a way that is accessible to a general, public audience. To explain the relationship between '*veda-mantra*' and '*purāṇa-mantra*,' Kolhatkar-*buwā* spent an extended amount of time in the *purvaraṅga* discussing what he felt to be a great travesty to the Gāyatrī—its commercialization and marketing via film and cassette recordings.

> Hey, these days the Gāyatrī is even recited in the cinema. *Cassettes of the Gāyatrī *mantra* are set to different tunes. The Gāyatrī *mantra* is put in different melodies—in different *rāgas* like *bhairavī*, *kedār*, *nanda*—how is this the Gāyatrī *mantra*? Some incredibly insane business is going on. Such sinning has never been seen in the world. These *mantras* that ought to be virtuously and respectfully kept secure—you'll encounter them even if you go to the bathroom, even in the *pānwāllā,* shop. Once, there was this *pānwāllā's* store, next to a Xeroxing store. I gave two pages to that Xeroxing store, and in the morning, that cassette was playing. He was Xeroxing, and there was the Gāyatrī *mantra*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000)

Sympathizing with Kolhatkar's shock at such sacrilege of the Gāyatrī, a Vedic text that he and his family has faithfully safeguarded for years, the *kīrtan* audience were

[129] Describing the counter-creation, Kolhatkar asserted: Viśvāmitra "produced a *saptarṣi* constellation towards the south. There is a great *śāstra* about this. This is told very succinctly in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, that there is a certain mechanics about what needs to be produced in order to create a new cosmos. First, he created the southern *saptarṣi*, and then, he produced new sets of constellations. He created a *cakra* called *śiṁśumān*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000).

[130] In the *Devībhāgavata* "the great sage [Viśvāmitra] took water with his hand, and infused in [Triśaṅku] the auspiciousness arising from the Gāyatrī. Giving this blessing to the king, he said to him, '*Rājarṣi*, go carefully, as you desire, to heaven'" (*DBhP* 7.14.6-7).

gasping and shaking their heads in dismay. Vividly reinforcing the domesticity of Vedic *mantras*, Kolhatkar then compared the delicate nature of these texts to a newborn baby:

> I am not able to sing it for you, because I am respectful of it. The Gāyatrī *mantra* is not some song from a *cinema. Not at all! It is not meant to be uttered all twisted around. How could it? If you had a son, a piece of the heart, then in order to protect him, you have to keep him in the home for the first three months...The birthing room was like the womb, in the old days. In other words, the birthing room is as if it's hiding inside the inner quarters [*mājghar*]. It's different in foreign countries. There is no sun there, and so everyone is wide open. The sun is not there. How can we make a comparison with that? It's a different world. And so they can't see the sun's rays there.[131] Here, the sun's rays penetrate everywhere they want. They'll go into quilts, they'll go into blankets. Their effect keeps going and so the birthing room is placed deep, deep inside, because it is like the inside of the womb. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000)

The effects of the analogy are obvious—the *kīrtankār* has mapped the abstract nature of the Gāyatrī onto the physical fragility of a newborn, safely tucked away in the innermost space of the home. Then, as such a delicate creature is moved under the glare of natural and artificial light, we are able to feel the *vaidika's* pain of hearing the Gāyatrī sung on cassette at the *pānwāllā's* store. Kolhatkar then articulated the fundamental nature of the problem, offering an important contrast between the domestic purity of Vedic *mantras* and the more public nature of the *purāṇa-mantras*. Not only are the Vedas fragile and sustainable only in the most interiorized space, but also they are a "ground-to-sky" (*jamīn-asmān*) distance from the publicly recited *purāṇa-mantra*, never mind the *bhajans*

[131] Here, I would like to point out a running theme of Kolhatkar's *kīrtans*—the comparison of "our" [Hindu] culture with "their" [American or European] culture. It is a common enough trend in *kīrtankārs* to report what they have seen in the West, and is indicative also of the concept of religious pilgrimage that *kīrtankārs* embody, in imitation of the itinerant Nārad. Kolhatkar's basic stance has always been one of irreconcilable difference—Hindu and western cultures can never truly understand one another; the *kīrtans* of Koparkar-*buwā* or now Carudatta Aphale-*buwā*, on the other hand, take a more combative position against Western culture.

of today's *bhakti*.[132] It is no accident, I contend, that this distance is parallel to the distance Triśaṅku must traverse in his quest for heaven, and no accident that the role of Viśvāmitra and his *tapas* in sending him there is parallel to the role of the devotee and his *bhakti* in taking his *ātman* towards liberation.

In fact, the *abhaṅga* Kolhatkar had chosen for the Triśaṅku *kīrtans* was Tukārām's "*Bhakta aise jāṇā*, *dehī te udāsa* [You can tell a devotee by his disinterest in the body]." Kolhatkar-*buwā* took Tukārām's ideas of differentiation of the *ātman* from the polluted body and applied them directly to the heavenly ascension of Triśaṅku's Caṇḍāla body. Just as Viśvāmitra's *tapas* and his Gāyatrī *mantra* was able to override the normative idea that Triśaṅku's polluted body cannot get into heaven, *bhakti* is also able to override the inevitability of *saṁsār*, of worldly existence. The only serious question that remains in such a picture is, what exactly is this *bhakti*?

Not surprisingly, Kolhatkar explained *bhakti* through narratives. He used a categorization of *bhakti* based on the śāstraic system of *guṇas* (characteristics), emphasizing first that *bhakti* need not be religious,[133] and that it divides into nine

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[132] More specifically Kolhatkar argued: "The *veda-mantra* is extremely delicate. A *veda-mantra* is not the same as a *purāṇa-mantra*. There is a distance of ground to sky between them. Between *purāṇa-mantras* and *veda-mantras*, there is a ground-to-sky distance. In order to recite the *veda-mantras*, you have to do the rites of *snān-sandhyā* [daily ritual bathing and sun worship]. Even a Brahman, if he doesn't do *snān-sandhyā*, has no authority to utter the Veda. The *veda-mantra* is not just "Rām Rām, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa" or the *Viṣṇu-sahasranām* [the "Thousand Names of Viṣṇu"]. It is very delicate. I'm not saying that the power of the Veda is greater or lesser. Anything can have greater or lesser power. But it is very delicate. And so it should be taken care of" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000).

[133] Kolhatkar gave hypothetical domestic examples of non-religious *bhakti*: "*Bhakti* comes in many forms. I have *bhakti* on *kīrtan*, I have *bhakti* on food. Wherever I may find something to eat, I'll go there. If I run out of money, then I'll go where you can find food for free. I like food. I like eating. Wherever. Aha—*kacchi dābelī*! [A popular snack sold by roadside vendors in Pune]. I want it. What do you say? 'You shouldn't eat it because you are a *kīrtankār*?' I'll eat it! I'll eat it in front of you. I'll eat it because I like it. That is to say, my love, my devotion, is on *kacchi dābelī*. On eating. Or on *bheḷ* [another roadside snack], or also, well, I don't really know too many of those products, so I'll eventually end up on *puraṇ poḷī* [a sweet flatbread, commonly cooked for holidays in Brahman households]" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

different forms based on the combination of the *guṇa* of the object desired mixed with the *guṇa* of the means of devotion.[134] Such an understanding of *bhakti*, declared Kolhatkar-*buwā*, was the real lesson behind the Viśvāmitra legends:

> Viśvāmitra's time was so long ago, then what is the purpose of our hearing this story now? When I begin to contemplate the propitiation of some God, or begin to think about some subject, is my line of thought *sāttvik*, *rajas*, or *tamas*? This is the issue. This is the reason we should think about it. Now Viśvāmitra's history is extremely ancient. Viśvāmitra did a great amount of *tapas*. He persevered for thousands of years. The type of *tapas* necessary to become a *brahmarṣi* must be of course *sāttvik tapascaryā*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

Kolhatkar has posited an important linkage between Viśvāmitra's storyworld *tapas* and his audience's realworld *bhakti*: by hearing the story, we may understand how our *bhakti*, like Viśvāmitra's *tapas*, may be refined to become *sāttvik-sāttvik*.

To substantiate his departure from the usual notion of *bhakti* espoused by *kīrtankārs*, consisting of *nāma-smaraṇa* (remembering the name of God) and selfless devotion to God, Kolhatkar connected Viśvāmitra's perseverance in practicing *tapas* with another, more widely known purāṇic legend concerning devotion, the legend of Dhruva.

> When Dhruva first sat down to do *tapas*, at that time he started his *tapas* with the thought that "I want permanent existence." But after six months of *tapas*, when he reached a state of *samādhi* [spiritual bliss]—see the *Bhāgavata*—when he attained *samādhi*, he so enjoyed the bliss of that condition that when Viṣṇu manifested himself before him and asked him "What boon shall I give you?" Dhruva did not then say, "I want eternal existence." He had realized that this *samādhi* thing was something special. Eternity was irrelevant compared to it. This is how it is described in the *Bhāgavata*.
>
> He said, "Oh Lord, Oh world-protector, Oh beauty of heaven and earth, give me such a kind of thing by which I may gain knowledge of the *ātman*." Viṣṇu replied, "You did not undertake austerities for that purpose. You did it for the purpose of gaining permanent existence. So due to that wish of yours—

[134] For example, Kolhatkar spoke of *rajas-rajas bhakti*: "In this worldly existence, I want recognition, fame, and so on. Is this bad *bhakti*? It's *rajas-rajas*—not a question of good or bad, we're just trying to understand it. Later, we can put on the *label good or bad" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).

> permanency—let you become permanent." Dhruva said, 'I have no use for this type of eternal existence, because that permanence will only last for one *manvantara* [epoch]. Then it goes away. Nothing is truly forever. Everything that we will produce, that will eventually be destroyed. Therefore, the Dhruva that we see at the moment will disappear sooner or later. But that which is the primordial state, that is what I wish for. There is such a place that once you have reached it, there is no sunlight, no darkness. I want to attain such a state."
>
> Then [Viṣṇu] said, "I am not going to grant you that state, because you did not ask for that while engaged in *tapas*. But after a long period of time, when the right opportunity comes along, then you should acquire this knowledge from your *sadguru* [true guru]." Then, he ruled for 40,000 years—Dhruva and Uttama, his younger brother. Then Svayambhū-Manu granted him the knowledge of the *ātman*. His grandfather was Svayambhū-Manu. This story is told in the *Bhāgavata*.[135] (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000)

In terms of both structure and meaning, I find Dhruva legend harmonic with the Triśaṅku legend. Both kings desire a type of impossible permanence—Triśaṅku wishes to go to heaven without dying, while Dhruva wishes to remain in one place forever. Both face stiff divine resistance, the former from Indra and the latter from Viṣṇu, and both require the assistance of a *guru* (Viśvāmitra and Manu) to arrive at their ultimate destination. And at least until the end of this particular epoch (*manvantara*), both are eventually fixed in the night sky, Dhruva as the northern Pole Star, and Triśaṅku in the southern sky as his *pratisṛṣṭi* inverse, according to the commentator Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (*Rām GPP* 1.60.21).

Kolhatkar-*buwā* did not speculate about these narrative connections between Dhruva and Triśaṅku, but instead used the Dhruva story to understand Viśvāmitra's *tapas* in *bhakti* terms.[136] Defending his digression into the legend, Kolhatkar declared, "The

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[135] The *Dhruvākhyān* is very popular in *nāradīya kīrtan*, but generally not told in the way that Kolhatkar tells it. For examples of the usual Dhruva story, see Badodekar 1986, 1-22, and Puranik and Devasthali 2000, 33-50.

[136] Balasaheb Sathe presents a similar translation of *tapascaryā* into *bhakti* through the *Prahlād-ākhyān* (Sathe 1937, 2-26).

relevant point here is that knowledge of the *ātman* is very particular, and we can gain many other types of happiness besides it. And these joys can only come through *puṇya* ('virtuous conduct'). And for that you must do *bhakti*. And Viśvāmitra has now set off on the path to accomplishing this *bhakti*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 6, 2000).[137] Kolhatkar achieves an equation of *tapas* with *bhakti*, and the *tapas*-*bhakti* homology is ultimately how his performance links story to discourse, providing a contemporary answer to the most compelling question that drive the Triśaṅku legend: how did Triśaṅku get to heaven? The *kīrtan* reformulates the question: how can we be liberated? That is to say, how can we know *ātman* despite our polluted bodies? Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s answer is through Viśvāmitra's *tapas*—that is, through '*sāttvik-sāttvik*' *bhakti*.

V. Conclusions

Our detailed investigation of the homologies in Kolhatkar's *kīrtans*, I suggest, can help us better understand how the epic and purāṇic Triśaṅku narratives 'translate' Triśaṅku's storyworld boundary-crossings and bodily transformations into realworld phenomena—*tapas* and *tīrtha*, counter-creation and constellations. We have seen that Kolhatkar-*buwā* engages in two directions of translation. First, there is the textual translation from interiorized *veda-mantra* to exteriorized *purāṇa-mantra*. The durability of the *purāṇa-mantra*, as opposed to the delicate nature of the *veda-mantra*, is what permits its public articulation:

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[137] Compare this analysis of Dhruva's *bhakti* with Badodekar, who suggests that "the Dhruva story is in fact a mirror of how when a person of great esteem is insulted, he truly takes it to heart" (Badodekar 1986, 22). The *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* emphasizes the reconciliation of Dhruva with his family, and particularly with Suruci, his father's second wife who had initially kicked him out of his father's lap (Puranik and Devasthali 2000, 49).

> The Veda is like a cilantro plant. You won't even notice when a sparrow might come and eat it up. And so if you plant cilantro, you have to leave a very thin *dhoti* out to dry, otherwise the sparrow comes and takes it out. It is very delicate. The *veda-mantra* is not as tough as the *purāṇa-mantra*. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 9, 2000)

Kolhatkar therefore urges *kīrtankārs* to study and present purāṇic sources, keeping the Vedas safely in the interior. In the case of this legend, the Viśvāmitra *ākhyāns* and the concept of *tapas* they describe translate the force of Viśvāmitra's Vedic Gāyatrī *mantra* for a general, non-Vedic audience. Purāṇic narratives are worldly translations of "delicate" and "specialized" knowledge found in the *veda-mantra*. The second homology is a discursive equation of *tapas* and *bhakti*. Rather than a modern translation of an older concept, I suggest the reverse direction—Kolhatkar is taking what he feels to be a misunderstood idea—*bhakti*—and translating it into a concept, *tapas*, that becomes well-defined precisely through purāṇic. In this way, the homology generated through a *kīrtan* performance involves both textual and discursive translations.

How do these translations shed light on epic and purāṇic intertextuality? Rather than simply genealogical models, this chapter has argued for a performance-centered model to explain the appearance of variation between the epic Triśaṅku and the purāṇic Satyavrata legends. Accompanying the textual translations of spatial movements and bodily transformations from one text to another are the discursive translations between *tapas*, *tīrtha*, *dharma*, and *devī-bhakti*. Just like modern-day *kirtankārs*, I conclude, composers of epic and purāṇic texts were most interested in forging homologies between the social, political, and religious structures of the storyworld conjured up in traditional legends and the social, political, and religious realities of the world around them. The epics and *purāṇas* embedded narratives like the synthesized Satyavrata/Triśaṅku/Śvapaca

legend in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* not simply as inert 'echoing' of older versions, but as active, historically contextualized negotiations between performers and audiences—as textual performances.

CHAPTER FIVE

HARIŚCANDRA AND ŚUNAḤŚEPA: THE COMPASSION AND THE VILLAINY OF VIŚVĀMITRA

The previous chapters of this dissertation have, out of necessity, involved a number of leaps of faith. The audience of a Viśvāmitra narrative makes a cultural leap of faith into the purāṇic storyworld, a remote past when, we are told, things worked differently than they do now. As he translates and reinterprets these legends in contemporary Pune, the *kīrtankār* Vaman Kolhatkar makes a literary and discursive leaps of faith between the Sanskrit texts he knows well (the Vedas, *śāstras*, and *purāṇas*) and the Marathi texts his audience knows well (*sant* literature). And finally, my analysis has made historical leaps of faith in comparing the ways in which these legends are performed today with the ways in which they have been embedded as textual performances within epic and purāṇic texts.

This temporal jump of at least three hundred years (for the *Nāgarakhaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*), and as many as twenty-three hundred (for the epics), is difficult if not impossible to sustain without discussing what has transpired in the years in between. At the same time, a purely diachronic 'master narrative' of unidirectional textual development—from Vedic to epic to purāṇic to medieval to modern—fails to do justice to a *kīrtan* performer who has memorized all the hymns of the *Ṛgveda-saṁhitā*, who regularly studies and contemplates on śāstraic and purāṇic texts, and who mixes them together in his *kīrtans* with medieval poetry, contemporary films, personal anecdotes, and

the news he has just seen on television. Moreover, Vaman Kolhatkar clearly has not been the sole storyteller to take such an approach to Viśvāmitra over the last two thousand years. What we seek, therefore, is a history of performances. In this chapter, I argue that during the telling of a purāṇic legend, there is a confrontation between personal memory and received traditions for the performer as well as the audience on all three levels of our examination: language, religion, and text. In other words, the epics and *purāṇas* have always involved gaps between realworld and storyworld, and these historical, discursive, and linguistic discontinuities are precisely what motivate the continued telling of stories from these texts.

This lengthy chapter will explore the nature of these confrontations through what is perhaps the most important Viśvāmitra narrative: the famed story of King Hariścandra and his harassment at the hands of a villainous Viśvāmitra. Unlike the other three chapters, we begin with folk versions, as they are found in *kīrtan* and in colonial folktale collections. Through a comparison with its earliest known account, found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, I argue that this legend maps *varṇa* onto domestic spaces in way that is critical of Brahmanhood. It is the presence of a counter-Brahman voice, I believe, that has made it so popular, and that allowed this legend to assume a degree of importance in the nationalist politics of Marathi and Hindi theater and film in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter then investigates the historical development of this legend in Marathi, beginning with its first articulations by the *bhakti sants* (poet-saints) of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Their religious interpretations of Hariścandra's suffering are remapped during the seventeenth century into a developing courtly aesthetic in Mukteśvar's *Hariścandrākhyān*. I begin with this

Marathi literary history to avoid privileging the earlier but significantly variant Sanskrit versions as 'original' and dismissing later vernacular versions as distortions. In doing so, I foreground the notion that each retelling is a critical, historically situated performance.

This chapter's second half turns to the Hariścandra legend in Sanskrit texts. Its most extensive treatment occurs in the *Caṇḍakauśika*, a Sanskrit drama composed most likely in Kannauj by Kṣemīśvara, "a contemporary of the more well-known Rājaśekhara in the first half of the 10th century" (Das Gupta 1962, liii). One of the few known literary adaptations of a Viśvāmitra legend, this play reworks the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* purāṇic telling.[1] The only other purāṇic version is found in the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, which reconciles Viśvāmitra's villainy with his heroic representation in the Triśaṅku legend. To make sense of how Viśvāmitra could be so merciful to Triśaṅku but so cruel to his son, this *purāṇa* uniquely 'prequels' Hariścandra with the vedic story of Śunaḥśepa, in which Hariścandra purchases a Brahman boy to be a human sacrifice, but is rescued by Viśvāmitra. Through an examination of the Śunaḥśepa legend's epic and purāṇic intertextualities, this chapter analyzes how the *Devībhāgavata's* 'textual performance' of fusing these two legends succeeds in creating a homology of immersion, through which an emergent discourse of *devī-bhakti* is 'immersed' into normative vedic discourse. To understand the mechanics of immersion, we return to Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* at the end of the chapter.

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[1] There are two other Sanskrit literary adaptations of Hariścandra: the first, an early twelfth-century Jaina play entitled *Satya Hariścandra*, composed by Rāmacandra, "the one-eyed pupil of Hemacandra" (Das Gupta 1962, lxx; see also Keith 1924, 258-259, 266, and Dasgupta and De 1962, 465, 475-476). This play has been edited (Arte and Puranik 1909) and translated into Italian by Mario Vallauri ([1913, Florence], reviewed by Keith in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [1914, 1104-1105]). The other is a Nepali '*yātrā*'-type of dance-drama called *Hariścandra-nṛtya*, edited in 1891 by August Conrady (see Das Gupta 1962, lxxiii).

I. Moving from dharma to bhakti in the folktale of king Hariścandra

The story of Hariścandra is the only Viśvāmitra legend that may properly be thought of as a folktale, at least in the artificial sense that it corresponds to a tale type (AT 939) in the Aarne-Thompson tale type index (Aarne 1964, 332).[2] The Hariścandra story varies greatly from region to region, and is told in *kīrtan* and other folk narrative genres all over India.[3] Furthermore, it is often told in informal settings, and is a narrative around which caste groups have constructed their identity.[4] And so the question arises, how and why did this Viśvāmitra legend, if indeed it may be called a Viśvāmitra legend, become so important orally? And why not the others? I suggest that we may gain significant answers to both questions through two approaches—one structural, concerned with the morphological and paradigmatic features of the narrative, the other hermeneutic, concerned with the religious interpretation of this legend.

A glance at the index entry for AT 939 helps to initiate a narratology:

> **939** *The Offended Deity.* Cf. Types 757, 947.
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> I. *A King Offends a Deity* [C50]. He loses his kingdom and his fortune [C930] and is forced to wander in poverty for a term of years. (a) His wife is stolen from him. (b) He must labor at menial tasks. (c) Taken in and helped by a friend, he sees a valuable necklace disappear before his eyes. Knowing he will be suspected of the theft, he is forced to flee. (d) He is bought as a slave and is ordered to throw corpses into a tank and collect a fee. His wife brings the corpse of his their son.

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[2] This is not to deny that the other Viśvāmitra legends are orally told, or that they lack folk motifs, or to suggest that they were never folktales; the implication is simply that the the Satyavatī, *kāmadhenu*, and Triśaṅku legends do not exhibit the amount of formal variation characteristic of a tale type.

[3] For a brief discussion of Hariścandra in Telugu *Bhāgavata-melā*, see Jones 1963, 196; for Hariścandra in the repertoire of the North Indian *bajnopadeshak*, see Vatuk 1967; for Hariścandra in the *nauṭaṅki* tradition, see Hansen 1983; for Bengali versions, see Dimock 1963.

[4] For the importance of the Hariścandra narrative in the identity-construction of the Rastogi caste in Uttar Pradesh (named after Rohita, son of Hariścandra), see Rastogi and Tyagi 1975.

II. *Restoration*. The king is eventually restored to his former position. (a) His wife (and child) are restored to him. Cf. Types 757, 947. India *8*.

As Kirin Narayan has noted, the broad outline of the type allows the Hariścandra legend to bear "strong resemblances to the tale of Nala and Damayantī, recounted in the *Mahābhārata* and existing in numerous regional variants" (Narayan 1997, 242).[5] Indeed, out of the eight published versions noted in the *Types of Indic Oral Tales*, the majority appears closer to Nala than to Hariścandra (Thompson and Roberts 1960, 119),[6] insofar as they do not involve the king's employment in the funeral grounds, the sale of his family, or the death of his son. Instead, like the *Mahābhārata's* Nala, they emphasize the separation and final reunion of husband and wife.[7] However, all the versions of AT 939 share the central theme of a king struggling to cope with undeserved misfortune, and therefore I suggest that these should be thought of as two distinct subtypes of AT 939. Roughly speaking, the 'core' of the Hariścandra subtype consists of the elements I (a), (d), and II (a), while the Nala subtype consists of I (a), (b), (c), and II (a).

What exactly is the story of Hariścandra? We find an excellent and useful version collected by Richard Carnac Temple, whose three-volume *Legends of the Panjab* was a landmark publication of international folkloristics for its time, notable for its forward-

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[5] Temple also notices the connections of Nala and Hariścandra: "Like the tale of Nala and Damayanti, the tale of Harishcandra is a very favorite one at the present day" (Temple 1900, 53). I will demonstrate below that the essential elements of the classical Nala story have been injected into the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa's* Hariścandra legend as a dream, indicating that this *purāṇa* was also aware of these parallels.

[6] Thompson and Roberts give eight instances of AT 939 in printed folktale collections up to 1960: Day 1912, 104-112, The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134-135, The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155, Stokes 1879, 68-72 and 224-233, Swynnerton 1892, 351-368, Temple 1885, 205-275, Temple 1900, 53-88. To these sources, we may now add Kirin Narayan's analysis (Narayan 1997, 109-124) and Susan Wadley's work on Vikramāditya (Wadley 1978) as well as several innovative studies of folk versions of Nala (Shulman 1994, Flueckiger 1998, Gold and Harlan 1998, Wadley 1998b, Wadley 2004).

[7] On the other hand, none exhibit the motif of gambling, which is arguably the essential feature of the epic Nala story.

thinking verbatim inclusion of uttered Hindi text alongside Temple's (often flawed) verse translations of these sung legends. In the third volume, he presents the "Legend of Harî Chand" (Temple 1900, 53-88), "as told by a celebrated bard from Baraut in the Meerath district," which he claims is "related in part in the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Aitareya Brâhmana* and in detail in the *Mârkandeya Purâna*, on which last the modern versions are mainly founded" (Temple 1900, 53).[8] The basic plot, following Temple's (Rajasthani) version, is as follows:

> Laying waste to Harî Chand's garden in the form of a wild boar,[9] Biswâmitr, disguised as a Brahman, then asked for and received the King's entire kingdom as a gift [*dân*].[10] He then demanded a ritual payment over and above this *dân*—a *dachnâ* [Skt. *dakṣiṇā*].[11] Harî Chand was therefore forced to sell his wife, his child, and finally himself into servitude in order to pay the *dachnâ*.[12] The son then

[8] He is referring to *MārkP* 7-8. Though I question his model of unilinear development, it is important to note that while Temple's intellectual influences likely include John Muir (the *Mahābhārata*), F. Max Müller, Albrecht Weber, and Rudolf Roth (the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*), and Frederick Pargiter (the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*), his respect for the folk version's deviations from the Sanskrit 'original' is remarkable. Temple's indebtedness to Muir's arguments in particular are rather apparent: "Viśvāmitra is an ever present personage in ancient heroic tales, and often plays, as here, a part intended to show the 'virtue' of complete submission by the laity to the priesthood" (Temple 1900, 53).

[9] In the Temple version, the people throughout the city cry: "*rājā kī lāj ik jānwar tārī*!"—"A beast hath ruined the Râjâ's honour!" (Temple 1900, 63).

[10] In Temple's version, the king was forced into exile due to his inability to keep his oath of slaying the boar (Temple 1900, 63-64). He then encountered Biswâmitr who asked him to help pay for his daughters' marriages. Harî Chand gave him his entire kingdom (Temple 1900, 67). In the first of two versions collected by Maive Stokes, entitled "The Upright King," Harchand Maharaja was tested by God, who "came down in the shape of a great boar and ate up everything that was in Harchand Maharaja's garden" (Stokes 1879, 68).

[11] In Temple's version, Harî Chand declared to his wife, "Hear Râni Târâwatî, I have given away every part of me in alms [*dān*]. We three must be sold for alms [*dachnā*], for I have kept back no part" (Temple 1900, 69). I have supplied in brackets the distinct Hindi words that Temple translated equally as 'alms,' but which thankfully maintain their distinct meanings in the transliterated original text located directly above Temple's translation. In Stokes's first tale, God again approached Harchand in the form of an old *fakīr* begging for alms. Harchand agreed to donate money, but mysteriously his treasury was turned to charcoal. (Stokes 1879, 69).

[12] In Temple's version, the wife was sold to a courtesan (*raṇḍī*), the son to a merchant (*seṭh*), and Harî Chand to "Kalwâ, the Scavenger." The queen was forced to become a courtesan, but she first bathed in the Ganges, so that "her soul went out of her beyond telling," and "she took off her veil and felt no shame" (Temple 1900, 75). As Hârî Chand reassured her, "*lāj gaī to jā̃ de; sat nahī̃ denā jān*" - "If thy honor go, let it go, but let not thy virtue go" (Temple 1900, 76). She was then "saved from death" by the merchant who had bought her son. (Temple 1900, 80). In Stokes's first tale, "The Upright King," they do not travel to Vārāṇasī, but Harchand's wife, Hirali, was sold to a merchant, his son Manikchand, to a cowherd, and

> died,[13] and the queen, full of grief, took him to the burning grounds.[14] Harî Chand, working there as a guard, encountered his wife and realized that she is carrying his dead son, but, obliged to obey his Caṇḍāla master's orders, was forced to kill his own wife.[15] At the last possible moment, God appeared and the king was saved.[16] The son was brought back to life, Biswâmitr proclaimed Harî Chand's steadfastness to *sat*, and his kingdom was restored.[17]

Of the eight versions referenced by the Aarne-Thompson tale type index, only the two discussed above seem to correspond directly to this plot sequence. The others, though clearly cognate versions, follow a story line that bears greater resemblance to the second half of the Nala and Damayantī story found in the *Āraṇyaka Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 3.50-78).

Harchand, to a Dom, "a man of a very low caste, who kept a tank into which it was his business to throw the bodies of those who died" (Stokes 1879, 70).

[13] In Temple's version, as in most, the son suffered the bite of a snake that is Biswâmitr in disguise (Temple 1900, 81-82). Stokes's "The Upright King" does not specify the cause of death.

[14] In Temple's version, before doing so, "she disheveled her locks in the palace and put on the garb of a *Jogin* [ascetic]" (Temple 1900, 82). In Stokes's "The Upright King," Hirali went to the tank thinking, "I know that man is my husband, so he will not take any money for throwing his child into the water" (Stokes 1879, 70).

[15] In Temple's version this is also Viśvāmitra's doing. In lieu of the funerary fees, Tarawati "took off her veil and gave it into [Harî Chand's] hand" (Temple 1900, 85), and, "*naṅgī*" (naked), she prepared the pyre. But then Viśvāmitra arrived there, and out of shame, the queen "went into the *sati's* hut" (Temple 1900, 85). Viśvāmitra declared that "A witch hath gone into the *sati's* hut, hear, O Kalwa. Cannibal she is and is making a disturbance. She has eaten up the son of Baijnath, the merchant" (Temple 1900, 85). Harî Chand was ordered to kill her. In Stokes's "The Upright King," this part of the story appears a bit different. In lieu of payment for funerary services, Hirali "tore off a great piece of her sari and gave it to him" (Stokes 1879, 71). Harchand threw his dead son into the tank, but "cried out to the king of the fishes, who was an alligator, 'Take great care of this body'" (Stokes 1879, 71). Then, for twelve years, Harchand then attempted to catch and eat fish, but every time, the fish "slipped back alive into the water, although it had been dead and cooked" (Stokes 1879, 71). Both motifs are found in the Nala subtype.

[16] In Temple's version, "His whole city was also saved...the city and Gangā [the courtesan] and Kalwā *bhangī* were [saved] with him" (Temple 1900, 87). In Stokes's "The Upright King," "God came down to earth in the shape of a man, and with him he took an angel to be his Wazir" (Stokes 1879, 71). The two approached Harchand, sitting by the tank, and God asked him "Would you like to have your wife, and your son, and your kingdom back again?" (Stokes 1879, 71). The King agrees, and then his son's body "rose up out of the water" (Stokes 1879, 71).

[17] In Temple's version, Indra announced: "He left his whole kingdom, but gave not up his virtue. He gave up all his money and food, and he gave up all that were dearest to his heart" (Temple 1900, 88). In Stokes's "The Upright King," "When they reached the palace, the garden was in splendid beauty; the charcoal was turned back into gold, and silver, and jewels; the servants were in waiting as usual, and they went into the palace and lived happily for evermore" (Stokes 1879, 72).

As scholars have remarked, the *Nalopākhyāna* is almost certainly an embedded folktale (Unni 1977, 10, cited in Gold and Harlan 1998), and presents a female-centered perspective in the Sanskrit epic, if not a truly feminine voice (Gold and Harlan 1998, 153, Flueckiger 1998, 178, referring to van Buitenen 1975).[18] The oral versions, however, lack two crucial motifs of the classical version: the gambling motif in which Nala loses his fortunes, and, many times, the separation of the couple. The sequence of events in the 'Nala' subtype of AT 939 is as follows:

> A king suffers the ire of a god (or simply bad luck),[19] and is forced into exile and poverty.[20] He must work meager jobs to earn a living.[21] He is separated from his wife,[22] and his (or her) appearance is transformed.[23] The separated couple endures

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[18] For a thought-provoking discussion of the structure of female-centered folk narratives, see Ramanujan 1991b.

[19] In Stokes's "Rájá Harichand's Punishment," God tests Harichand's generosity, and, arriving as a fakir, asks for his wife. He has the fakír beaten and sent away. (Stokes 1879, 225). In the first of two anonymous versions recorded in *North Indian Notes and Queries*, the king is named Vikramaditya, who must judge which star is greater: Shukra (Venus) or Brihaspati (Jupiter). He chooses Venus, and Jupiter decides to get revenge (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134).In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá takes over the affliction of the 'goddess of poverty' from a poor, unfortunate Bráhman (The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155). In Day's version, this god is Sani, who has an argument in heaven with Lakshmi, the goddesss of good luck, over who has higher rank. They come and ask the hero, Sribatsa, to decide, and, when he indirectly chooses Lakshmi—by offering her a gold stool while giving Sani one made of silver—Sani casts his evil eye on Sribatsa for three years (Day 1912, 333).

[20] In Stokes's "Rájá Harichand's Punishment," Harichand is asked to choose between twelve-year famine or twelve-day rain—Harichand chooses the former. Everything in his palace turns to stone, and his wealth turns to charcoal. He and his wife dress as *fakīrs* and leave for another country (Stokes 1879, 226). In the first *NINQ* version, the impoverished Vikramaditya goes to his sister's home, where he is made to live in the stables and fed meagerly (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134). In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá's palace is demolished in a storm, and all his wealth is buried in the ruins, and the king is forced into the jungle (The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155). In the Day version, Sribatsa and his wife Chintamani leave in exile, bringing all their money and jewels hidden in a mattress, which is lost as they cross a river (Day 1912, 334).

[21] In Stokes's "Raja Harichand's Punishment," Harichand and his wife work selling grass, ironically, in the kingdom of Rájá Nal, whom they are too ashamed to ask for help (Stokes 1879, 230). Vikramaditya does not labor in the first *NINQ* version, though he does reside first in his sister's stables and then in the home of his friend the jeweler (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134). In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá first begs, then cuts wood for a living.(The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155). In the Day version, the couple settles in a village and Sribatsa makes money logging for sandalwood. Jealous woodcutters, however, drive them out of town. In another town, Chintamani spins fine cotton, again arousing the envy of other spinsters who are envious of her skills (Day 1912, 334-335).

[22] In Stokes's "Raja Harichand's Punishment," the couple is not separated (Stokes 1879, 226-228). In both *NINQ* versions, the king sends the Ráni to her parents' house at the start of the story (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134, The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155). In Day's version, Chintamani is carried off by boatmen as she goes to the river to bathe (Day 1912, 335).

a series of hardships,[24] including being falsely accused of stealing royal jewels.[25] He is helped by an oil-presser.[26] He then arrives at a *svayaṁvara* (a marriage-choice ceremony) and wins the princess.[27] His curse is lifted, he is reunited with his wife, and his kingdom is restored.[28]

There are two significant differences between these two subtypes: the presence (and demise) of the son in the Hariścandra-subtype and the substitution of the offended Brahman (or *fakīr*) for the 'offended deity' of the Nala-subtype. This latter motif-substitution is tied to a shift of theme: whereas the Nala subtype is propelled by the

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[23] No transformation takes place in Stokes's version, or in the *NINQ* versions. In Day's version, Chintamani, kidnapped by the boatmen, pleads to Lakshmi to make her ugly in order to maintain her chastity (Day 1912, 336).

[24] In the Day version, Sribatsa searches for his wife along the river, and encounters a 'cow of plenty' that defecates pure gold (Day 1912, 335-336). The boatmen who have kidnapped his wife spot the mound of gold. They take the gold and also capture Sribatsa. Sribatsa recognizes his wife in the boat despite her foul appearance (Day 1912, 336-337).

[25] In Stokes's version, while staying at the home of Rájá Bhoj, a gold necklace hanging on the wall of the room in which the couple is sleeping disappears into a crack in the wall (Stokes 1879, 229). In the first *NINQ* version, Vikramaditya, while sleeping in a room in the jeweler's home, notices a peg devouring the necklace hung from it. Vikramaditya runs away but is caught and his hands and feet are cut off (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134). In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá is given a diamond necklace by thieves who had stolen it from the local king. Soldiers then find him with the necklace, and his hands are cut off (The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155).

[26] In Stokes's version, the couple's friend, the wealthy oil merchant named Gangá Télí, houses Harichand and his wife, but treats them poorly because they are poor, and so they leave in disgust (Stokes 1879, 228). In the first *NINQ* version, Vikramaditya help oil-pressers press a large amount of oil for the marriage of the Rája's daughter. Vikramaditya sings a magic song to light all the lamps at once (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134). In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá takes refuge in the house of an oilman, who feeds him in return for running his oil-press (The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155).

[27] There is no *svayaṁvara* in Maive Stokes's "Rájá Harichand's Punishment." Instead, Rájá Nal recognizes recognizes his friend and his wife, and they live well in his palace for four and a half years (Stokes 1879, 230-231). In the first *NINQ* version, the princess asks an elephant to throw a garland around Vikramaditya. He throws it around the cripple, laying in a dung heap, and the two are married (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 134-1350. In the second *NINQ* version, the Rájá goes to the *svayaṁvara* of the regional king's daughter, who chooses the Rájá. She was not to be dissuaded, and they married and moved into a mansion that her father provided The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155).

[28] In the Stokes version, Mahádeo visits the farmers of Harichand's country, which continues to remain in famine, and unwittingly blows his horn, ending the famine after ten years. Then the king and queen return to the palace (Stokes 1879, 232-233). In the first *NINQ* version, Vikramaditya prays to Shukra to restore his limbs, which he does, and then triumphs over his new father-in-law and his brothers-in-law. The peg disgorges the necklace in the jeweller's house, and Vikramaditya rejects his sister's belated offers of hospitality. The curse of Brihaspati is removed and Vikramaditya lives happily with his two Ránís (The Adventures of Vikramaditya 1894, 135).In the second *NINQ* version, a pair of swans give the Rájá a medicinal root from the jungle, which restores his hands. His father-in-law, hearing of his recovery, then conquers the kingdom from the other king, and he is given back his kingdom and family (The Goddess of Poverty 1895, 155).

unpredictability of divine power, the Hariścandra subtype involves a human villain who is divinely powerful, but who unreasonably and mercilessly tortures this good king.[29] While the Nala subtype is ultimately a narrativization of 'humanity' (Wadley 1998b, 163-164), the human struggle against fate, the Hariścandra subtype may be said to narrate a human struggle in the face of overwhelming 'inhumanity.'[30] Moreover, since the villain is a Brahman and the hero a Kṣatriya, the Hariścandra subtype uniquely raises questions of sociopolitical difference, offering what I believe to be a fundamentally non-Brahman representation of Brahmanhood.[31]

When named, Hariścandra's tormentor is always Viśvāmitra, and in many versions, his cruelties result from a feud with Vasiṣṭha: Vasiṣṭha's praise of Hariścandra's truthful character (termed *satya* in most Sanskrit versions, *sattva* in Marathi versions and, ambiguously, *sat* in Hindi) instigates Viśvāmitra's oath to vanquish Hariścandra's *sattva* or give up his accumulated *tapas*. Other versions explaining Viśvāmitra's cruel behavior, and particularly the purāṇic ones, ascribe it to Hariścandra's disturbance of the sage's asceticism (*Mārkaṇḍeya*), or to debts unpaid (*Devībhāgavata*). But save for one important telling (the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*), no available version explicitly questions Viśvāmitra's status as a Brahman, as the sons of Vasiṣṭha do during the *Rāmāyaṇa's*

[29] David Shulman has argued that the *Mahābhārata's* Nala narrative represents a "symbolic *précis*" of the larger epic, in which "Evil, which like time, is initially outside the hero, an alien remnant, is here internalized, assimilated, absorbed" (Shulman 1994, 26). In the Hariścandra legend, as we will see, this 'evil,' represented by Viśvāmitra, is never assimilated, but simply endured.

[30] An extended discussion of Nala in the Rajasthani oral epic *Ḍhola* is found in a forthcoming book by Susan Wadley (Wadley 2004; see also Wadley 1978, Wadley 1998b, Wadley 1998a, Wadley 2001).

[31] Narayan, while collecting a version of AT 939 ("The Thunder Thread," in Narayan 1997), remarks that she was "eager to see these stories as critiques of caste," but concludes that they instead "situate social divisions like caste within a larger framework of transitory and illusory forms, driven by karma and fate" (Narayan 1997, 152). While this appears to be the case in the fate-oriented Nala-subtype, I will argue below that the Hariścandra-subtype—particularly through the dream motif—works to subordinate the 'higher' philosophical doctrines of illusion (*māyā*) to the sociopolitical realities of *varṇa*, questioning the humanity of this ideological discourse; the questions are normatively answered through performance.

Triśaṅku story, or as Vasiṣṭha himself does in the *Skanda Purāṇa's kāmadhenu* legend. Though there are allusions to his Kṣatriya past—e.g., in the *Caṇḍakauśika* as Viśvāmitra declares himself to be "the sole Brahman [*vipra*] who is ill-mannered [*durlalita*] due to attaining his *jāti* on his own [*jāti-svayaṅ-grahaṇa-durlalita-ekavipra*]" (*CK* 2.24)[32]—on the whole, Viśvāmitra appears as an irascible *ṛṣi* of great ascetic power but of undeniably Brahman *varṇa*. The *varṇa* dichotomy of Kṣatriya and Brahman is therefore clearly narrativized into a conflict between the protagonist Hariścandra and antagonist Viśvāmitra.

In previous chapters we have understood the opposition of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, or Triśaṅku and Vasiṣṭha, as a mapping of normative *varṇa* structuralism onto an 'folk' narrative structuralism of domesticity. Particularly in its purāṇic tellings, the Hariścandra legend also involves the mapping of *varṇa* onto domestic spaces. Brahmanhood is mapped initially onto Viśvāmitra's *āśrama* and later onto the home of Tārāmatī's Brahman purchaser (often also thought to be Viśvāmitra in disguise).[33] The Kṣatriya *varṇa* is projected onto Hariścandra's palace in Ayodhyā, while Caṇḍālahood is mapped onto the burning grounds and the Caṇḍāla's home. As with the other legends, it is the movements of characters into and out of these *varṇa*/domestic spaces that generate discursive questions that spill out of the storyworld. As we will discover, however, the Hariścandra legend also involves a mapping of religious discourse as well as sociopolitical structure. Onto Ayodhyā is mapped *dharma* and onto Kāśī is mapped

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[32] The *Caṇḍakauśika* also alludes in this verse (and the next) to Viśvāmitra's killing of Vasiṣṭha's sons (in the Kalmāṣapāda legend), his sacrifice for a Cāṇḍāla (Triśaṅku, though he is unnamed), his counter-creation (*sargāntara*) and his *āḍi-baka* battle with Vasiṣṭha, which we will discuss in detail below.

[33] It is interesting to note an exception in Phalke's 1913 cinematic version, *Rājā Hariścandra*, in which their purchaser is in fact the king of Kāśī. I thank Dhananjay Kapse for this and several other colonial references to Hariścandra narratives in Marathi and Hindi literature.

bhakti, and Hariścandra's movement from one city to another acts as a discursive movement, so that the legend is able to present solutions to dharmic dilemmas by applying *bhakti* doctrines.

It is in the *dharma*-centered Ayodhyā scenes that we find the movements that we described in the other chapters, of iconic characters through *varṇa*-mapped domestic spaces. While chasing after the boar that has intruded his domestic gardens, Hariścandra is drawn out alone into the dense forest and near the meditating Viśvāmitra.[34] In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the initial encounter occurs when, "chasing some game in the forest" (*MārkP* 7.4), Hariścandra attempts to save women in distress, who are the personification of "knowledges" (*vidyās*) being subdued by the *tapas* of Viśvāmitra.[35] His *tapas* broken, Viśvāmitra becomes enraged. This conflict is a narrativization of the śāstraic opposition between Kṣatriya and Brahman *varṇas*, as demonstrated through Hariścandra's immediate apology:

> And when the sage said, "Wicked man, stop!" the king respectfully prostrated before him and said, "Lord, this is my *dharma*—it is no crime of mine, master. Please do not be angry with me, sage, I am only engaging in my *svadharma*. A world leader who is knowledgeable in *dharma* ought to be generous and protective, and, raising his bow, he should do battle, according to the *dharmaśāstras*." (*MārkP* 7.16-18).

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[34] In Marathi literary and *kīrtan* versions the boar is replaced by eleven crores (110 million) of tigers.

[35] The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* asserts that it was Vighnarāj, the 'Lord of Obstacles,' who entered into the body of Hariścandra in order to break the sage's *tapas*, which was growing dangerously to even Śiva's power (*MārkP* 7.7-10). Kṣemīśvara, in the *Caṇḍakauśika*, also includes this motif of Vighnarāj-possession, with variation: Vighnarāj was also the boar that had lured Hariścandra out of the city and into the forest (*CK* 2.3-5). The *Mārkaṇḍeya* does not dwell on the identity of Vighnarāj, but in the *Caṇḍakauśika*, Vighnarāj explains to the audience: "I am the one who made problems even in Śambhu's [Śiva's] spiritual bliss [*samādhi*], and during the sacrificial rites of Dakṣa as well as Śiva's love-play with his wife—I am that great obstacle, devoted to whimsical [*vibhrama*] ruin with respect to the completion of activities [*vyavasāya-siddhi*] that are done to being about the good of the three worlds" (*CK* 2.3). We may thus assume it is a character identical in function to Kali in the Nala story, or Fate in most versions of AT 939.

Viśvāmitra asks for a clarification: "To whom should you give? Whom should you protect, and with whom are you to fight, King?" (*MārkP* 7.19), and Hariścandra explains: "One should donate to the principal Brahmans as well as others who are in an impoverished condition. One should always protect the frightened, and one should wage war against enemies standing in the way" (*MārkP* 7.20). But what happens when the Brahman is the enemy? There is no dharmic solution to this Kṣatriya dilemma. Moreover, neither Kṣatriya force (*bala*) nor Brahmanic *tapas* is viable here—Hariścandra's only choice is to comply with Viśvāmitra's demands, and he and his family are expelled from Kṣatriya domestic space.[36]

Exiled from Ayodhyā, Hariścandra enters a quintessentially non-dharmic space: there are no śāstraic explanations for why Viśvāmitra is so cruel at the gates of Ayodhyā where, in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Viśvāmitra mercilessly beats Hariścandra's wife "again and again with a stick of wood" (*MārkP* 7.60). Hariścandra, his wife (called either Tārāmatī in Marathi versions or Śaibyā in Sanskrit ones)[37] and his son (called Rohitākhya in Sanskrit versions and Rohidās in Marathi) my only remain true to themselves (illustrating the notion of *satya/sattva*) and humbly suffer their fate (*MārkP* 8.17). In the Marathi versions, it is during this liminal period, placed in between Ayodhyā and Vārāṇasī, that Hariścandra, stripped bare of wealth, power, and status, suffers the Job-like eventualities of human existence. There is an inability of śāstraic discourse to end the suffering of this noble trio, and to solve it, the audience must turn to *bhakti* and accompany Hariścandra on the long, hard road to Vārāṇasī.

[36] It is at the moment of Hariścandra's departure that in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* telling the citizens of the city as well as the Viśvedevas (the cosmic deities) object to Viśvāmitra's abuse (*MārkP* 7.60).
[37] As Śaibyā, she is the daughter of the king Śibi, linking the Hariścandra legend to another quintessential *bhakti* legend of selfless Kṣatriyahood—Śibi's protection of the dove.

In practically all versions, it is here that Hariścandra takes his family when he is thrown out of his kingdom, for since Vārāṇasī is "the property of Śiva, the trident-bearer," (*MārkP* 8.4) it is therefore not under Viśvāmitra's dominion. In complete contrast to the normative sway of *dharma* and royal authority in orderly Ayodhyā, Vārāṇasī is a chaotic place teeming with the foul and the wicked, a city of slave-trade, grisly burning grounds, merciless Brahmans, wealthy courtesans and powerful Cāṇḍālas. Vārāṇasī is also structured, in the sense that *varṇas* exist and are mapped onto physical spaces, but counter-normatively: it is apparent social behavior in this city is not ordered by normative hierarchy—as evidenced by the portrayal of the public auction block. Here, in contrast to the events in Ayodhyā, where the king was forced to defer to the superiority of the Brahman, anyone may become anyone else's master for the right price, and the horror of the story lies precisely in the fact that king Hariścandra is forced to enter into Caṇḍāla domestic servitude. Furthermore, Hariścandra's wife's sale into either a courtesan home (as in Temple's oral version)[38] or, more often, into a Brahman home, leads to the death of their son and sometimes more suffering due to the Brahman's cruelties.[39] In other words, all the domestic spaces of Vārāṇasī—Brahman, courtesan, untouchable—only compound the protagonists' suffering, so that his only escape is to "meditate on the Great One (*paramātman*), the lord Nārāyaṇa" (*MārkP* 8.240). It is *bhakti* that eventually detangles the situation. Depending on the version, either

[38] In the Marathi literary versions (Nāmdev, Janābāī, Mukteśvar) the queen is *almost* sold to a courtesan, but a Brahman buys her at the last moment, saving her from ignominy.
[39] The purchaser is Viśvāmitra in disguise in the *Devībhāgavata* (*DBhP* 7.22.7), but simply "some old Brahman" in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* (*MārkP* 8.53). In the Marathi versions, Tārāmatī's purchaser is named 'Kāḷa-kauṣika. Though the name suggests Viśvāmitra, these characters are generally set in opposition in Marathi accounts, where Kāḷa-kauśika is a kind and compassionate Brahman. In the *purāṇas*, the purchaser is Viśvāmitra in disguise.

Hariścandra raises his sword to kill his wife (in Marathi versions), or the couple, with no other choice before them, decides to violate *dharma* and enter their son's funeral pyre (*MārkP* 8.230-239, *DBhP* 7.27.1). Only at the very last moment does Viṣṇu comes to their rescue.[40] Whereas in the Ayodhyā scene, *dharma* forces Hariścandra out of town, in Vārāṇasī, *bhakti* sends Hariścandra to heaven. The ascension motif is found primarily in purāṇic versions, while most folk versions end with the king's restoration to the throne. The *Mārkaṇḍeya's* Hariścandra, for example, is invited into heaven by the gods on account of his "innate virtues of perseverance, patience, and *satya*," despite Viśvāmitra's best efforts to steal it away (*MārkP* 8.246); he enters heaven only when his devoted subjects, whom he calls his *bhaktas*—that is, the entire city of Ayodhyā—are also admitted into heaven.[41]

The Hariścandra legend's narratological structures are remarkably consistent from version to version. In nearly all folk and literary renderings, the story takes place first in Ayodhyā and then in Vārāṇasī, and in all of them, there is an underlying binary opposition between the Kṣatriya Hariścandra and the Brahman Viśvāmitra. The variation, as we shall see, takes place in the interpretation of its discursive opposition between *dharma* and *bhakti*. More than any other Viśvāmitra legend, the Hariścandra story consistently articulates a non-Brahman voice and invokes non-śāstraic discourse; more

[40] In most versions, Viṣṇu rescues them. In the *Devībhāgavata*, however, Hariścandra concentrated on "the highest Lady, the hundred-eyed Goddess of the world, who exists within all five *kośas*, who has the nature of *brahman*, who is its tail-end, who wears red, who is an ocean of the *karuṇā rasa*—Ambā, who wields many different types of weapons, who is devoted to taking care of the world" (*DBhP* 7.27.2-3). In the Marathi *Kathā-kalpataru* (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 346), his prayers are answered by Bhavānī, the powerful regional goddess patronized by the Marāṭhās.

[41] This "abandonment of *bhaktas*," insists Hariścandra, "is seen as a great sin equivalent to Brahmanicide, *guru*-murder, cow-slaughter, and women-killing" (*MārkP* 8.260). The king's demand requires a bending the rules, since the Ayodhyāns had "many different levels of virtue and sin" (*MārkP* 8.263)—this is solved as Hariścandra divides up his merit so that they may all go to heaven for just one day.

than any other Viśvāmitra legend, this narrative explicitly questions the universality of Brahman-centered *varṇāśrama-dharma*, presenting a scenario in which *dharma* fails to do justice and *bhakti* is the only way out for the (non-Brahman) upright man.

Hariścandra in *nāradīya kīrtan*

Though such a picture may imply non-Brahman origins, the Hariścandra legend is equally—if not more—prevalent in Brahman folk groups, and it is one of the primary narratives in the repertoire of the contemporary *nāradīya kīrtankār*. The Hariścandra story is generally told in *kīrtan* to celebrate the climactic moment as Hari himself finally extricates Hariścandra from his horror. As the version given in volume two of the somewhat canonical *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* (originally published in 1936) explains:

> Even though many crises had befallen him, that virtuous King Hariścandra, through *satya*, *sattva*, his unfailing *bhakti* upon the place of Parameśvar, his endurance [*titīkṣā*], and through other qualities of his body, was able to overcome all of these crises. The *jagannitya* [world-eternal] God himself freed him due to his bodily virtues of unfailing, unparalleled *bhakti*.[42] (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 54)

Furthermore, the *kīrtan* telling does not shy away from exposing Viśvāmitra's duplicities and cruelties. Through a ruse, Viśvāmitra lures Hariścandra out of his city and into the forest (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 36-38). He then sends a group of beautiful "Mātaṅga" women to seduce the king (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 39). When he declines their offer, Viśvāmitra angrily confronts the king: "Hey king, you are too intoxicated with kingship [*rājyamada*]. On account of this you have insulted my servants and you have killed my

[42] Though its primary purpose may be to extol Hariścandra, the *kīrtan* version gives prominent devotional place to his queen, Tārāmatī. Her acts of devotion repeatedly unravel Viśvāmitra's plots. For example, during the journey from Ayodhyā to Kāśī, when she is separated from her husband and son, she dutifully lights a fire and makes ready to enter into it—a scene compared to Pārvatī's immolation during Dakṣa's sacrifice. Viśvāmitra is forced to console her, extinguish the fire, and convince her not to immolate herself (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, vol. 2: 42). Even Rohidās, before succumbing to the venom of the Viśvāmitra-dispatched snake, asks his friends to give his respects to his mother (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, vol. 2: 49).

beasts” (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 39). In Vārāṇasī, with Hariścandra “forced to take a earthen pot upon his head, and to fill up water at the house of a low-*varṇa* Ḍomb” (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 48), Viśvāmitra comes and repeatedly shatters his earthen pot, whereupon Hariścandra suffers beatings and beratings from the Untouchable’s wife. Everyday, Viśvāmitra would come and beg away Hariścandra’s daily meal, so that Hariścandra starved for a year without food. After Rohidās’s death, when Tārāmatī falls asleep keeping watch over his body, “Viśvāmitra tore apart that corpse, took out the innards, and smeared the blood on her mouth [*duḥkhī̃ nijenẽ tīsa vyāpitā̃ viprẽ phāḍuni preta* | *ā̃taḍī̃ kāḍhuni tanmukha limpī śoṇita lāvuni tetha* ||]” (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 51). He then accused Tārāmatī of being a demoness (*lā̃va*) who eats babies. None of these scenes are unique to the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī’s* telling, and I will examine their lengthy history in Marathi literature in the next section.

The *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī*, as scholars have argued (Pathak 1980), has had a normativizing effect on the contemporary world of *nāradīya kīrtan*. The narratives of this four-volume collection, reprinted thrice in 75 years, have often been treated as ‘standard’ versions, taught to young *kīrtankārs* and used by many professionals; they are, however, often not identical to those found in personal collections of *kīrtankār* families. The *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī* ties this *ākhyān* to a *pūrvaraṅga* exegesis of a verse by Raṅganāth Swami (1612-1684) extolling the life-changing merits of *bhakti*: “If you seek refuge of that Hari with firmly resolute emotion, then you will avoid the cycle of birth and death and you will achieve greatness” (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 35). It also advocates immersion into *bhajan*: “leaving everything we should be immersed in the *bhajan* of that one Parameśvar, and we should eternally sing his praise through doing *kīrtan*. Only if we

do this, might our living be fruitful" (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, 35).[43] It is no surprise to find that Vaman Kolhatkar's approach is vastly different, as he focused his *kīrtan* on determining the root causes of Hariścandra's misfortunes and reassessing Viśvāmitra's villainy.

Kolhatkar-*buwā*, a bit to my surprise, placed surprisingly little emphasis on the Hariścandra legend. He did not grant it space in his *uttararaṅga*, where purāṇic narratives are formally presented in *nāradīya kīrtan*, relegating it to a brief *pūrvaraṅga* exposition in the fourth day of the Śunaḥśepa legend, almost as an impromptu aside, in order to explain the *abhaṅga* he had chosen for that day, Tukārām's "*durbuddhice manā*." He first explained that the entire sequence of horrific events was a direct result of Hariścandra's earlier *durbuddhi* that becomes apparent in the Śunaḥśepa episode—and not Brahman cruelty. Kolhatkar then briefly narrated the horrors of what Hariścandra was forced to endure, but did not tell the story in chronological order.

The *buwā* assumed (correctly) that his audience was familiar with the story, and in contrast to his very deliberate and linear performance of the more obscure Śunaḥśepa legend, he began with the climax, as Hariścandra is forced to kill his wife:

> Such a terrifying event took place, in which Hariścandra is working for that Ḍomb, and the Ḍomb told him, "Kill that woman!" He coudn't tell him, "That is my wife." They have brought her here. Why? Because she eats little kids. This is her accusation. In reality it is her own son who has died and fallen into her lap (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000).[44]

He then traveled backwards through the narrative, quickly describing the son's snakebite (neglecting to mention that the snake was dispatched by Viśvāmitra), then lingering on

[43] For the importance of Raṅganāth Swami as a *rājayogi* (a royal mendicant), see Tulpule 1979, 400-401.
[44] Notice the intermixture of present and past tenses in the *buwā's* narration. This is an aspect of what I argue is a homology of 'immersion', in which the 'present' context of performance is thrust into the mythic 'past' of the storyworld.

the burning grounds of Kāśī, proclaiming that “I am unable to tell you these descriptions here, these descriptions of the cremation grounds.” Instead of detailing the horrors of the burning grounds, Vaman Kolhatkar broke out of his storytelling frame and provided references to textual sources, including a conversation between him and myself that had taken place in the prior week:

> A horrific scene—such a horrific scene, and his life in it has been described, it has been told in the *Devībhāgavata*, and an even more horrifying description is narrated in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and, [pausing and looking at me, seated in the audience] which play did you say? [I replied, ‘*Caṇḍakauśika*.’] A small play called *Caṇḍakauśika*—I haven’t seen it, but he’s told me that such a description is also found there. Such a horrifying scene is described that it makes us shiver. Such a terrifying description it is of the funeral grounds—in a burning ground. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000)

Why did Kolhatkar not describe the burning grounds? And why did he allude to his purāṇic sources (as well as the fruits of my library research) to cover this gap? It is true that the horrific descriptions of the Vārāṇasī burning grounds would have elicited shrieks and gasps of horror from his Nārad Mandir audience, and the *bībhatsa rasa* (‘sentiment of horror’) is largely proscribed from *kīrtan* performance because of its unsuitability in generating *bhakti* emotions (Pathak 1980, Kolhatkar 1964, Koparkar 1982). However, this *buwā* does not exactly shy away from ‘shock and awe’ tactics—generic norms, for example, did not prevent him from giving the gory details of the Delhi train-massacres he witnessed in the aftermath of the Indira Gandhi assassination (see Chapter One).

In fact, moments after declining to describe the burning grounds, Kolhatkar described, in rather grotesque terms, details of the contemporary burning grounds of Kāśī while decrying the folk belief that those that die in Kāśī go immediately to heaven:

> The Kāśī burning grounds are very *developed. Even now. There are very different conceptions of the funeral grounds at Kāśī. That if a person dies there, he

> suddenly gets up, and so on. These are the stories. It's not that they are true. They are old, because behind them there are *dantakathās* [oral tales—literally, "teeth stories"]. Let reality be whatever it may be, but this is the folklore. And so, from eighty miles away, they bring dead people to Kāśī. And there, they put a little bit of fire on him, and when he's lit a little bit here and there, they leave. And the poor fellow, his body is only half-burnt! And going "*hāi, hāi*," he falls into the water of the Gangā, and that's why the Gangā is so horrible there. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000)

Kolhatkar described this modern-day horror in order to explain that "in reality, this is not the *śāstra*. No *śāstrakār* has said that 'you are to put the bones in the Gaṅgā.' If someone wants to give their body to God, they are to do it with a living body, not a dead one. These incorrect ideas have arisen in our country in many places" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000). In order to debunk this folk belief, Kolhatkar digressed into an extended yogic interpretation of '*kāśī-maraṇ*,' transforming the idea of going to heaven by dying at Kāśī to a metaphysical movement of the *buddhi* within the body.[45]

So why did he shirk away from describing cremation grounds, but then moments later do it anyway? Though his descriptions pale in comparison to the vivid purāṇic descriptions of piles of corpses and burnt flesh, I suggest that it has to do with a fundamental relationship between the present and the past that takes place during a performed text. [46] Anna Schultz has described two types of linkages between the present

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[45] In a metaphorical remapping, Kolhatkar explained that Kāśī, etymologized through its root *kāś* meaning light, represents "that light that is inside every creature," and therefore "death at Kāśī," which is said to lead one directly to heaven, really means "taking our *buddhi* [intellect] near this light and letting it go" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000). As he put it, "It's not that Kāśī-pilgrimage means that I'm sitting on the Vārāṇasī Express, I go there, and then I'm liberated! If liberation was so simple, then '*maraṇa te mukti, pākhaṇḍyācī* [death is liberation for the non-believer]'" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 14, 2000).
[46] Consider the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa's* detailed picture: "The cremation grounds resounded with harsh sounds, filled with hundreds of corpses, inhabited by vultures and jackals, surrounded by packs of dogs. It was filled with piles of bones and an assembly of incredibly foul odors; half-burnt faces of corpses with gaping rows of teeth that seemed like they were laughing, situated on a body in the middle of the fire. There were also the many sounds of the friends of the dead, filling the place with a tremendous clamor: 'Grandmother, father, grandson—where have you gone? Come back, my brother!' The place was filled with

and the past that take place in *rāṣṭrīya* (nationalist) *kīrtan*: anachronism of contemporary nationalist themes or mythification of modern nationalist leaders (Schultz 2004, 75). In the previous chapter, I argued that these represent a homology of 'translation,' in which the unfamiliar storyworld past is rephrased by the *kīrtankār* into terms familiar to the audience. Here, I am suggesting another type of homology is at work, in which the audience is 'immersed' into the storyworld through performance.

The greatest problem that a *buwā* has, Kolhatkar claims, is in enabling the *kīrtan* audience, steeped as it is in contemporary Hindu religion and politics, to understand the ancient world as it is represented in the *purāṇas*. This scholarly ambition is why he consistently provides śāstraic references, and why he takes such pains to introduce his audience to *sāṅkya*, āyurvedic, and upaniṣadic theories—in order to reconstruct the structures within which the ancient world operated. And this is why he refuses to narrate the purāṇic descriptions of the cremation grounds, since the resulting emotions of shock and horror are exotifications, in contrast to the readily understandable shocking images of present-day burning grounds. In other words, he is trying to immerse representations of contemporary phenomena into the structural frames of the past. In doing so, Kolhatkar's *kīrtan* does not simply mythicize the present or modernize the past, but, through the performance, makes his audience experience the purāṇic storyworld. This immersion enables the critique of contemporary beliefs and discourses using the authority of purāṇic texts, while at the same time allowing modern-day images of horror (synchronically emerging from his audience's imaginings of "half-burnt corpses") to migrate into the

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these dreadful words of the living, but also with the crackling sounds of burning flesh, marrow, and fat" (*DBhP* 7.24.18-23).

purāṇic storyworld. As we shall see when we return to his *kīrtan* at this chapter's conclusion, Kolhatkar's approach to this legend—subordinating it to the Śunaḥśepa legend—was not simply a result of textual fidelity to the *Devībhāgavata*, but a critique of the type of passive *bhakti* which he feels has become the norm in today's *kīrtan* in favor of a fusion of *bhakti* with an active (and interiorized) śāstraic notion of *dharma*.

Hariścandra on the colonial stage: Khadilkar and Bharatendu

The Hariścandra legend became a favorite, during the colonial-period heyday of Marathi, Bengali, and Parsi 'mythological' theater (Yajnik 1933, 89, 97, 106). Hariścandra was the subject of the first motion picture produced in India, Dadasaheb Phalke's 1913 *Rājā Hariścandra*, as well as the first 'talkie' a decade later, and this seems to have been directly due to the influences of Marathi and Parsi theater of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the then-flourishing genre of *kīrtan*.[47] Hariścandra was one of the key stories staged during the heyday of Marathi *paurāṇik* theater, including an influential version produced in 1914 by K. P. Khadilkar. In the North, this legend was the subject of the well-known drama *Satya Hariścandra* (1875) by the "Father of Modern Hindi" (Hariscandra 1988, 14), Bharatendu Hariścandra (1850-1885), whose work appears to be an adaptation of the then recently edited *Caṇḍakauśika* (1860, 1868).[48] The autobiographical nature of Bharatendu's work is not to be overlooked; as an English translator, Madan Gopal, comments,

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[47] For a discussion of the role of Dadasaheb Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* in both nationalist and theatric movements, see Rajadhyaksha 1987.
[48] Bharatendu Hariścandra mentions that the legend has been referred to in "Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata's* 'Śāntiparva' and the *Mārkaṇḍeya and Kālika Purāṇas*" (Hariscandra 1988, 17). This legend, again, is not to be found in the critical editions of the two epics.

> He was generous to a fault, giving away a most expensive shawl to a beggar shivering in cold or a gold inkstand to a child who had taken a fancy to it. Because of his extravagance, his family had the assets partitioned, hoping he would mend his ways. He didn't. He continued his ways, declaring openly that he would 'eat up' the wealth that 'had eaten up his ancestors.' (Hariscandra 1988, 15)

The Hariścandra legend is not without nationalist resonance, and the king's suffering became a key trope in the developing independence movement. As a narrative focused on the theme of truth, it was an influence on the personal philosophy of Mohandas K. Gandhi. As Gandhi comments in his autobiography:

> I had secured my father's permission to see a play performed by a certain dramatic company. This play—*Harishcandra*—captured my heart. I could never be tired of seeing it. But how often should I be permitted to go? It haunted me and I must have acted Harishcandra to myself times without number. "Why should not all be truthful like Harishcandra?" was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishcandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me. I literally believed in the story of Harishcandra. The though of it all often made me weep. (Gandhi, quoted in Hariscandra 1988, 13)

If the Hariścandra legend of noble king's fidelity to *satya* in the face of exile and poverty may have inspired Gandhi's *satyāgraha*, it also served a more directly political purpose on stage.

The nationalist strategies of Marathi *paurāṇik* theater have been well-documented, with epic and purāṇic legends such as Khadilkar's *Kīcak-vadh* being performed as scenes of political revolution thinly veiled by purāṇic masks. Shakuntala Limaye explains that "*paurāṇik* dramatists, blanketing themselves in the veil [*burkhā*] of purāṇicity [*paurāṇikatā*], laid out questions of development as well as of a political nature" (Limaye 1978, 128). The thin veil of culture enabled the creation of a new political space, not unlike (and arguably not unaware of) the political space created

through the veil of religion in precisely this period of time by the then-youthful genre of *rāṣṭrīya kīrtan* (Schultz 2004).[49]

Through conceptualizing the political leader as "one upon whom the responsibility comes to provide a lesson for others through his conduct" (Limaye 1978, 136, quoting Khadilkar), staged versions of the legend urged national leaders to regard the British Raj as the King Hariścandra treats the villainous Brahman Viśvāmitra—with an unlimited though perhaps foolhardy generosity,[50] and with an unwavering though perhaps humbling nobilityin the face of the severest of cruelties.[51] In Khadilkar's *Satvaparikṣā* (The Truth-test), Hariścandra served as "a mirror of how a king or leader ought to be, and in a real sense, made *rūḍha* the language of social *satvavād*" (Limaye 1978, 137). The struggle for independence, in the eyes of this legend, ought not to involve violent revolution, but endurance, perseverance, and moral self-sacrifice. As we shall see, the use of this narrative to articulate such a political discourse, and even perhaps its competition with a more militant messages, has a lengthy history in Marathi literature.

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[49] As Limaye explains, "It became possible for *paurāṇik* dramatists to create a *koparkhalā* around the British and touch on politics. Covertly, more or less *kuvatinusār*, dramatists demonstrated and spread their views against the *kuṭiḷ* government of the British" (Limaye 1978, 128).

[50] While commenting on the puranic origins of Mukteśvar's seventeenth-century Marathi narrative poem *Hariścandrākhyan*, Nandapurkar demonstrates the contemporary interpretation of Hariścandra's gift of his kingdom to Viśvāmitra as foolish: "In the stories of the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and the *Devībhāgavata*, Hariścandra regards giving *dā*s his *dharma*; he even takes pride in it; he runs his kingdom engaged in giving donations for even the most trifling things. In the *Devībhāgavat*a, he even realizes that it is foolish and becomes frustrated, but because of *īrṣā*, he completes it" (Nandapurkar , 723, quoted in Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 7).

[51] Kathryn Hansen examines the Hariścandra legend in early twentieth-century Hindi *nauṭaṅkī* folk theater as complementary to another, more violent story of resistance, *Sultānā Dākū*, in which "an outlaw of presumably humble origin acquires fame, respect, and wealth through his brave deeds"(Hansen 1983, 323). With respect to Sultānā, claims Hansen, Hariścandra "represents the other side of the same coin—a mighty and virtuous king fallen to the level of an untouchable. The lasting success of this legend again lies in its inversion of the social order, its acknowledgement that even the great must suffer and endure oppression at the hands of the low" (Hansen 1983, 323). While Hansen is ambivalent towards who Hariścandra exactly represents—the Indian or British ruler—it is clear that on the Marathi stage he indeed is the former.

Hariścandra in medieval Marathi literature: Nāmdev, Janābāī, Mukteśvar

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it thus appears that the Hariścandra legend was performed in at least two discrete literary spaces—the cultural stage of *paurāṇik* drama and film, and the religious stage of *nāradīya kīrtan*. While undoubtedly affected by oral and classical versions, the greatest influence on Marathi dramatists seems to have been their immediate literary antecedents. Of these, the most significant is the seventeenth-century narrative poem (*ākhyān-kāvya*) consisting of 608 *ovīs* (a particular Marathi meter), entitled *Hariścandrākhyan* by the poet Mukteśvar (1609-1660).[52]

Considered to be the grandson of Eknāth (1533-1599), the Brahman poet Mukteśvar lived in Paiṭhaṇ and is best known for his Marathi rendition of five chapters of the *Mahābhārata*.[53] Mukteśvar is considered by some to be "the first Marathi poet," (Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 17), insofar as he "displaced the purpose of literary production from the path of spirituality—of making the world devoted to *bhajan*, of making the city of Marhāṭas *sukāḷu* in *brahman*-knowledge, something that had come down for generations—onto the path of worldliness" (Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 17). Tulpule has noted that "in spite of his occasionally moralising he is not a poet-saint like his grandfather Ekanātha" (Tulpule 1979, 370), and that "he was the first poet to take inspiration from the *Bhakti* movement of the poet-saints and employ it for purely literary

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[52] Though Tulpule points out the difficulties in dating Mukteśvar, and puzzlingly considers him to belong to the first half of the sixteenth century (Tulpule 1979, 368), here I follow the convincing arguments of Deshpande and Varhadpande's introduction to their edition of the *Hariścandrākhyān* (Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963).

[53] As Mukteśvar himself notes, the composition of his *Mahābhārata* was an intertextual craft: "I have produced this ornament in the *deśa-bhāṣā* [country tongue], having extracted the gold from the textual mountain of Vyāsa with my discerning intellect hand made it heavy with the jewels of literature [*vyāsa granthagirice sone* | *saṁskṛta, khoṭiye gāḷuni maneṁ* | *deśabhāṣā ghaḍileṁ leṇeṁ* | *sāhityaratnīṁ sujaḍita* ||]" (*Sabhāparva* 1.21, quoted in Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 14).

purposes" (Tulpule 1979, 370). Gore and Ok note that "his poetry suddenly slips out of the purposes of *bhakti*/liberation and into the worldly level" (Gore and Ok 1977, xvi). Mukteśvar's transformation of the earlier Marathi versions of Hariścandra, through a thematic shift from *bhakti* to aesthetics, is traceable to a debate over kingship in seventeenth-century Maharashtra.

The legend of Hariścandra appears in four different literary versions before Mukteśvar[54]—two fourteenth-century versions by Nāmdev (1270-1350) and Janābāī (d. 1350),[55] and two sixteenth-century versions by Kṛṣṇa Yājñavalkī (c. 1570) and Viṣṇudās Nāmā, whose *Hariścandra-purāṇ* was translated into Portuguese in the seventeenth century by a Father Francisco Garcia (Tulpule 1979, 366).[56] For the most part, these Marathi versions follow an identical plot:

> Hearing Nārada's praise of Hariścandra in heaven (Janābāī 294.4), Viśvāmitra becomes angry.[57] He then wagers with Vasiṣṭha to take away Hariścandra's *sattva* (Janābāī 295.5-6). Though Vasiṣṭha comes to Ayodhyā and warns the king (Janābāī 296), the sage then conjures up a host of tigers in Hariścandra's dominion (Janābāī 297.5) that the king must hunt (Janābāī 297.10-11),[58] drawing him and his wife into his *āśrama* using a golden deer as a lure

[54] According to Bhingarkar, the Hariścandra legend is told in Marathi by "Visobā Khecar, Nāmdev, Janābāī, Viṣṇudāsanāmā, Kṛṣṇa Yājñavalkī, Mukteśvar, Śrīdhar, Moropant, Jagajīvan Prabhū and Kṛṣṇadās" (Bhingarkar 1989, 170).
[55] Nāmdev's *Hariścandra-rājāce Caritra* is told in 268 verses and is numbered 2256 in the *Sakala-santa-gāthā* (vol. 1: 381-387). Janābāī's *Hariścandra Ākhyān* is told in 22 *abhaṅgas* of 320 stanzas, numbered 294-316 in the *Sakala-santa-gāthā* (vol. I: 452-458) and numbered 432-468 in the *Śrī Nāmdev Gāthā* (Babar 1970, 989-1007).
[56] The "Hariścandra Rājācī Kathā" appears in *adhyāyas* 12-13 of *stambak* 7 in Kṛṣṇa Yājñavalkī's *Kathā-kalpataru.* I refer here to a modern Marathi prose rendering of this text by D. S. Yande (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 332-346). For a comparative study of Janābāī's and Viṣṇudās Nāmā's versions, see Bhingarkar 1989, 219-223. Bhingarkar suggests, rightly, that like Mukteśvar's *Hariścandrākhyān*, Viṣṇudās Nāmā's work is a conscious retelling of Janābāī's version.
[57] Nāmdev does not include the scenes in heaven, nor most of the Ayodhyā scene, beginning his narrative with Hariścandra's exile from his kingdom (Nāmdev 2256.15-16), after having given away his kingdom in the dream (Nāmdev 2256.2-3).
[58] In Janābāī's version, Viśvāmitra performs a "Mātaṅga rite" to conjure up the tigers (Janābāī 297.2), and as a result, cows won't graze, and there are no paths to conduct trade (Janābāī 297.7). This rite is described in great detail in the *Kathā-kalpataru*: he sits on a sheep, marinates rice in his own blood, and then offers it

(Janābāī 298.4).[59] Viśvāmitra unsuccessfully tempts the king with dancing girls (Janābāī 298.14-16),[60] and then begs for his kingdom in a dream (Janābāī 300.1-5).[61] Upon waking, Viśvāmitra approaches Hariścandra and asks for a *dakṣiṇā*—the king promises to give him gold when they return to the palace(Nāmdev 2256.4-5, Janābāī 301.4).[62] Returning to Ayodhyā, the sage reminds the king that he has already given him his entire kingdom, including his treasury (Janābāī 301.19-26, Nāmdev 2256.7-11). Despite the lament and protests of his subjects (Nāmdev 2256.22-30, Janābāī 302.12), Hariścandra, Tārāmatī and their young son Rohidās are forced to leave for Vārāṇasī to sell their bodies into slavery and repay the debt.[63]

Along the road to Kāśī, Viśvāmitra continues to harass them—first making the sun heat up, the rains cease, and the winds stop blowing (Janābāī 306, Nāmdev 2256.33-38).[64] He then comes in disguise and begs for their shoes, which Hariścandra grants immediately (Janābāī 305, Nāmdev 2256.43). Viśvāmitra then creates a forest fire [*vaṇavā*]; in the smoke, Tārāmatī is separated from her husband and son (Janābāī 303.1-3, Nāmdev 2256.47-50). The sage then approaches her and tells her they are dead, showing her their corpses (Janābāī 304.5-7, Nāmdev 2256.52-55). In great lament, she then keeps watch over their bodies during the night (Janābāī 304.9-12, Nāmdev 2256.62-70).[65] Viśvāmitra then appears as a tiger and snatches away the bodies, torturing her even more, but then suddenly the real Hariścandra appears with Rohidās at his side (Janābāī

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into the fire. The Goddess Bhavānī then emerges from the fire to give Viśvāmitra a boon—Viśvāmitra asks for tigers (Yande 1999, vol 2: 334).

[59] Janābāī describes the *āśrama* as an extraordinarily placid space, where "a cow and tiger were licking one another" (Janābāī 298.9).

[60] He offers them money, but they insist on having him sexually, saying euphemistically, "We crave your own form (*svarūpa*)" (Janābāī 298.16). Angered, the king orders his minister to have them beaten and thrown out (Janābāī 298.18).

[61] In Nāmdev's version, this scene is simply summarized at the start of the narrative (Nāmdev 2256.1-3); Janābāī gives more details: After Viśvāmitra asks for the kingdom during the dream, Hariścandra agrees, but insists that the gift must be be given in the city (Janābāī 300.6). Then, the king sees a "Kāḷapuruṣa [Death-man]" who attacks him with a club (Janābāī 300.10-11). This motif is not in Nāmdev's or Kṛṣṇa Yājñavalkī's versions.

[62] In Nāmdev's version, Hariścandra gives both the kingdom and the *dakṣiṇā* in his dream. In Janābāī's version, when the king awakes, the minister suggests giving a gift to a Brahman to negate the portents (Janābāī 300.17-19).

[63] In Nāmdev's version, they voluntarily leave all their ornaments and jewelry (Nāmdev 2256.20), while in Janābāī's version, the sage takes them by force (Janābāī 302.17-18).

[64] Nāmdev specifically mentions Vedic gods: Āditya (Nāmdev 2256.33), Varuṇa (Nāmdev 2256.34), Vāyu (Nāmdev 2256.35). The order of events during the journey differs from version to version. I have given Nāmdev's version. In Janābāī's version, the forest fire comes first, then Tārāmatī's separation and lament, then the scene with the tiger and corpses. Then Viśvāmitra asks for the trio's shoes, makes the sun shine harder, and creates the false garden, tempting the trio with water.

[65] The scene of Tārāmatī's separation and suffering is perhaps the tragic climax of the Marathi versions. In Nāmdev's version, she cries to Pāṇḍuraṅga (Nāmdev 2256.62), and is urged by Viśvāmitra to cremate the bodies (Nāmdev 2256.67-68), who also reminds her that Hariścandra is a debtor (Nāmdev 2256.70).

304.13-20, Nāmdev 2256.74-77).[66] He then tempts them with food and water at an illusory garden by the side of the road (Janābāī 307, Nāmdev 2256.81), but they survive the test, refusing the Brahman's refreshments (Janābāī 308-310, Nāmdev 2256.83-101), and trudge on to Kāśī despite their suffering.[67]

At Kāśī, first the trio bravely travels through the "*vos nagar*"—an abandoned suburb of the city.[68] Arriving in town, they first bathe in the Gaṅgā (Nāmdev 2256.114).[69] Then, under pressure from Viśvāmitra, they tie grass on their heads and offer themselves for sale (Nāmdev 2256.117, Janābāī 311.7). Tārāmatī is sold to a Brahman named Kāḷa-kauśika, who also buys her son at her request (Nāmdev 2256.133, Janābāī 311.13-14).[70] Hariścandra is sold to a Ḍomb named Vīrabāhu, whose wife puts him to work fetching water for their house (Janābāī 311.23-26).[71] Viśvāmitra, however, keeps poking holes in his waterpot, and the Ḍomb and his wife berate and beat him (Nāmdev 2256.166-168).[72] Viśvāmitra also comes in the guise of a Brahman and begs for Hariścandra's daily meal, which he gives him nobly (Nāmdev 2256.170-174, Janābāī 312.8-10).[73] This happens everyday, and Hariścandra becomes weak and feeble (Nāmdev 2256.175-176, Janābāī 312.14). Hariścandra is then appointed to guard the cremation grounds (Janābāī 311.30, Nāmdev 2256.176-177).[74]

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[66] This scene is resolved differently in each version. In Janābāī's telling, when Tārāmatī holds in her breath as a last recourse (Janābāī 304.18), Viśvāmitra desists, returning her husband and son. In Nāmdev's version, when the sage becomes a tiger, growls, and drags away Rohidās, Tārāmatī faints (Nāmdev 2256.75). In the morning, Hariścandra arrives out of nowhere (*akasmāt*) with Rohidās on his side (Nāmdev 2256.76-77).

[67] In Nāmdev's version, all three identically assert that "this is not our *dharma* [*navhe āmucā hā dharma*]" (Nāmdev 2256.84).

[68] In Nāmdev's version, it is inhabited by "horrible *piśācas* [demons]" (Nāmdev 2256.107), and to survive, "they concentrated on the feet of Vasiṣṭha and kept the thought of Nārāyaṇ in their minds" (Nāmdev 2256.108). In the *Kathā-kalpataru*, the town has large houses and manors, but all in shambles, populated by scorpions, snakes, *ghoṇas*, *saraḍs*, frogs, and cobras. (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 341).This scene is not found in Janābāī's version.

[69] In Janābāī's version, they take *darśan* (visitation) with Śiva (Janābāī 311.3).

[70] In many versions, she is first almost bought by a courtesan who fancies her beauty, until at the last possible moment, Kāḷa-kauśika steps in (Nāmdev 2256.122-127). The courtesan is not found in Janābāī's version. Nāmdev describes Kāḷa-kauśika as a *daśagranthī* (knowing the ten texts), and a *saḍśāstrī* (knowing the six *śāstras*), Janābāī calls him an "*agnihotrī*" (Janābāī 311.13). The Marathi versions in general see him as a compassionate and merciful Brahman, who assigns Tārāmatī to cook in his *āśrama* (Nāmdev 2256.36).

[71] In Nāmdev's version, the Ḍomb's wife questions his purchase: "Why have you brought home this haggard young man? What a waste of money" (Nāmdev 2256.161)!

[72] Hariścandra is not beaten in Janābāī's telling.

[73] This motif is not found in the *Kathā-kalpataru*. The Marathi versions stress that the Ḍomb gives Hariścandra dry grain to cook himself (Nāmdev 2256.168-170, Janābāī 312.4-5).

[74] In Nāmdev's version, the king is renamed "Mhasaṇa-khāmbā [the pillar in the cremation ground]" when put to work in the burning grounds (Nāmdev 2256.178).

Meanwhile, Rohidās is bitten by a snake.[75] After finishing her work, Tārāmatī searches for the body, tripping over it in the dark (Nāmdev 2256.190-193).[76] Tārāmatī then laments over her dead son (Nāmdev 2256.198, Janābāī 313.12-14). Viśvāmitra approaches her and urges cremation, helping her build the fire (Nāmdev 2256.200-205, Janābāī 314.1-4). As she is lighting it, Hariścandra comes and demands the cremation fee (Nāmdev 2256.205, Janābāī 314.5-6). They recognize one another and lament their fate (Nāmdev 2256.209-225, Janābāī 314.6). Hariścandra then goes to ask permission from the Ḍomb to cremate his son (Nāmdev 2256.228-229).

While he is gone, Viśvāmitra reappears and urges Tārāmatī to go hide in a temple (Nāmdev 2256.230, Janābāī 314.9). She soon falls asleep, and Viśvāmitra dessicates the corpse and smears Rohidās's blood and entrails over her (Nāmdev 2256.231-233, Janābāī 314.11-12). The sage then alerts the townspeople that a *lā̃v* [demoness] is in the temple (Nāmdev 2256.233, Janābāī 315.1). The townspeople catch her, and the Ḍomb orders Hariścandra to execute her (Nāmdev 2256.240-241, Janābāī 315.4-5).[77] Hariścandra asks his wife to make her last wish (Nāmdev 2256.242-244);[78] she asks that in each life she have Hariścandra as her husband, Rohidās as her son, Viśvāmitra as her petitioner [*yācak*] and Vasiṣṭha as her *guru* (Nāmdev 2256.246-248, Janābāī 315.11-12).[79]As Hariścandra raises his sword, Viṣṇu comes to the rescue, embraces him, and revives his son (Nāmdev 2256.250-252).[80] Viśvāmitra then apologizes and gives him his *tapas* (Nāmdev 2256.253-260, Janābāī 315.13).[81] The gods invite Hariścandra to heaven, but

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[75] The snake is not necessarily dispatched by Viśvāmitra in Nāmdev's version, but Janābāī asserts that Viśvāmitra "bit him in the form of a snake" (Janābāī 313.8). The *Kathā-kalpataru* also suggests that the snake is Viśvāmitra in disguise (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 344).

[76] In Janābāī's version, the Brahman compassionately allows Tārāmatī to go and attend to her son (Janābāī 313.11).

[77] In Janābāī's version, the people first throw "shit, dirt rocks, and mud" at her (Janābāī 315.3). The *Kathā-kalpataru* has a variant: once Tārāmatī is sentenced to death, Nārada asks Viṣṇu to intervene (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 345).

[78] In Janābāī's version, Viśvāmitra asks her to make the wish (Janābāī 315.9-10).

[79] The verse is oft-quoted in later literature and in *kīrtan*. In Nāmdev's version, her wish is: "Hariścandra as my husband, Rohidās as my child, Viśvāmitra as my caring questioner / As my *śrīguru*, Vasiṣṭha, ocean of mercy—may his hand be on this head. / Give me this from lifetime to lifetime, O Nārāyaṇ, I have no other wish. [*bhratāra hariścandra rohidāsa bāḷa* | *māgatā snehāḷa viśvāmitra* ‖ *śrīguru vasiṣṭha kṛpecā sāgara* | *aso tyācā kara mastakī hā* ‖ *hẽci janmojanmī̃ de gā nārāyāṇā* | *nāhīṁ he vāsanā āṇikā̃cī* ‖]" (Nāmdev 2256.246-248). In Janābāī's version, Tārāmatī smiles and says: "A son like Rohidās, a husband like King Hariścandra. / A petitioner like Viśvāmitra—give me these from lifetime to lifetime, Lord of the Earth. [*rohidāsā aisā putra* | *hariścandra rājā bhrātara* ‖ *yācaka viśvāmitrā aisā* | *janmojanmī̃ de jagadīśā* ‖]" (Janābāī 315.11-12). In the *Kīrtan-taraṅgiṇī*, this verse appears as follows: "'May I have, in each and every birth, Hariścandra as my husband, the sage Vasiṣṭha for my *guru*, / Rohidās as my son, and Kauśika for a petitioner,' asked that noblewoman, bowing reverently. [*nātha hariścandra asāo janmojanmī̃ guru vasiṣṭha munī* | *suta rohidāsa yācaka kauśika māge asẽ satī namunī* ‖]" (Kemkar and Joshi 1993, vol. 2: 53).

[80] In Janābāī's version, it is Viśvāmitra who rushes in as Hariścandra is polishing and sharpening his sword (Janābāī 315.8-9).

[81] In Nāmdev's version, Vasiṣṭha also arrives and embraces all three (Nāmdev 2256.255-256).

instead, he returns to his throne and rules successfully (Nāmdev 2256.261-262, Janābāī 316.3-7).[82]

It is apparent that Nāmdev and Janābāī—and indeed all of the Marathi poets and even *kīrtankārs*—are telling the same version of the legend, with only minor divergences of detail. In particular, they all include an extended narration of Viśvāmitra's harassments during the trio's arduous trip to Vārāṇasī. These intermediary scenes are not found in any non-Marathi versions, classical or folk, suggesting that the series of events is part of a Maharashtra-specific *oicotype*. Besides reflecting perhaps the physical tortures of traveling in the arid, hot wilderness of the Deccan plateau, the Marathi versions articulate a non-Brahman *bhakti* discourse particular to the medieval *sants* of Maharashtra.

As the sage takes their shoes, tempts them with forbidden food and water, and tortures Tārāmatī with corpses, it is evident that in this liminal space between Ayodhyā and Vārāṇasī - symbolic of *dharma* and *bhakti*—the greatest task facing our protagonists is the spiritual control of the physical body, a critical part of the Marathi *sants*' teachings. As Tukārām professed in the seventeenth century, and as is repeatedly stressed in *kīrtan*, "*bhakta aise jāṇā*, *dehī̃ te udāsa* [Devotees are recognized by their disconcern for the body]." While the events in Ayodhyā and the events in Kāśī are not unimportant to the Marathi tellings, the physical struggles of Hariścandra and his family reach their climax during their journey in between these cities, as their bodies, no longer couched within the *dharmic* social structure of Ayodhyā, and not yet bathed in the purificatory waters of the Gaṅgā at Vārāṇasī, are brutalized by hunger, pain, and thirst. Their coping with these physical tribulations through a maintenance of *sattva* becomes a homology for the

[82] In Nāmdev's version, he rules for 60,000 years (Nāmdev 2256.261-262). In the *Kathā-kalpataru*, Viṣṇu, takes the trio to heaven in their own bodies (Yande 1999, vol. 2: 346).

realworld movement of non-Brahmans towards liberation, despite the polluted castes of their bodies, arguably the greatest concern of the early Marathi *bhakti* poets (Tulpule 1979, 338). *Sattva*, of course, has long been a śāstraic concept as an intrinsic part of the *sattva-rajas-tamas guṇa* triad, but here, it seems to be critical to *bhakti*, for it is regarding *sattva* that an intertextual dialogue emerges between the fourteenth-century poets Janābāī and Nāmdev.[83]

There is little difference between the two *sant*-poets' portraits of Hariścandra's coping with human suffering. One minor interpretive difference between them, however, involves how Hariścandra and his family maintained their *sattva* during their ordeal. Nāmdev leans towards a *dharmic* interpretation of Hariścandra's behavior—thus, when offered food and water during their journey, all three refuse Viśvāmitra's offer, explaining: "This is not our *dharma*" (Nāmdev 2256.84, 97, 103). Nāmdev's version also places the idea of *sampradāya* in more prominence—along with Viṣṇu, their *guru*, Vasiṣṭha, embraces the trio in the story's conclusion (Nāmdev 2256.255-256), and throughout the narrative, the family meditates on both the names of both God and their *sadguru* when caught in predicaments. Janābāī, on the other hand, places less emphasis on the formal religious constructions of *dharma*, *nāma-saṅkīrtan*, or *sampradāya* as much as an internalized *bhakti*, and in particular Tārāmatī's blind faith. For example, as Viśvāmitra (as a tiger) drags away the illusionary corpses of her husband and son, he desists when she holds in her life-breaths (Janābāī 304.18). Then, when she is about to be executed by her own husband, the sage himself comes and takes hold of Hariścandra's

[83] The *Kathā-kalpataru* appears to be a retelling of Nāmdev's version. Kṛṣṇa Yājñavalkī seems to be aware of the differences between the two, and is critical of Janābāī's telling (Bhingarkar 1989, 218-219). He rejects Janābāī's scene of Viśvāmitra holding Hariścandra's arm as he is about to kill his wife because it "has not been told in Sanskrit" (*Kathā-kalpataru* 7.17.124-129, quoted in Bhingarkar 1989, 218).

sword arm, not God, as in Nāmdev's version (Janābāī 315.9-13). In fact, Viṣṇu does not appear at all in Janābāī's Hariścandra legend. With this difference, Janābāī demonstrates a *bhakti* in which disempowered individuals, and particularly women, are able to maintain *sattva* and to cope through service, despite the absence of God, while working to overcome the "selfishness [*ahaṁbhāv*] of the body" (Bhingarkar 1989, 127). In contrast, Nāmdev emphasizes the external, spiritual reliance on the presence of God and *guru* for final salvation. Though both versions are largely similar in theme and structure, it is no accident, I believe, that that Mukteśvar builds upon Janābāī's version in his *Hariścandrākhyān*.

Mukteśvar has lifted a large number of verses and plot devices within the *Hariścandrākhyān* directly from Janābāī's poem (Bhingarkar 1989, 203, Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 11-12).[84] At the same time, Deshpande and Varhadpande have convincingly argued that Mukteśvar's *Hariścandrākhyān* is a hybrid rendition: "It cannot be said that while writing the *Hariścandrākhyan*, Mukteśvar read Janābāī's but did not consult those of any others. Though this may be an improved and expanded version of Janābāī's *ākhyān*, it appears that he had reserved the ability to consult others as necessary for his artistic production" (Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 13).[85]

How is it 'improved and expanded'? That is, what are the interpretive transformations that take place between Janābāī/Nāmdev and Mukteśvar? Three hundred years of the growth of *bhakti* as well as political turmoil—the fall of the Yādavas, the

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[84] For a list of parallels and detailed comparative study of Janābāī and Mukteśvar, see Bhingarkar 1989, 203-219. Deshpande and Varhadpande also provide a set of correspondences (Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 12). Bhingarkar compares both poets' renditions of the Hariścandra and Thālīpāka legends; see also Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963 and Gore and Ok 1977 for more debates on the origin of the *Hariścandrākhyān*.

[85] See also Nandapurkar 1950, Tulpule 1979, 369.

"dark age" of Muslim incursions (Tulpule 1979, 344-348), and the onset Marāṭhā consolidation of power under Śivājī—must have influenced Mukteśvar's depiction of Hariścandra's heroism and Viśvāmitra's villainy. V. B. Patwardhan has noted that Mukteśvar was "the first poet who…composed for the sake of pure joy of literary achievement" (quoted in Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 18) and R. S. Jog has described him as "the first poet to throw aside the *jokhaḍ* of *adhyātma* [philosophy] on literature" (quoted in Deshpande and Varhadpande 1963, 18). This movement towards worldly aesthetics appears in his *Hariścandrākhyān* during the lengthy descriptions of the flora and fauna in Viśvāmitra's hermitage (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.81-84 + 7 verses)[86] and in the false garden that the sage creates on the road to Kāśī (*Hariścandrākhyān* 2.199-203). His tendency towards generating *rasas* (Tulpule 1979, 368) is demonstrated in his terrifying description of Viśvāmitra's Tantric rite (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.59-61 + 9 verses) and the ghost town (*vos nagar*) outside of Kāśī (*Hariścandrākhyān* 3.291-292 + 2 verses), his valorous descriptions of Hariścandra's armies as they set out to vanquish Viśvāmitra-created beasts harassing the countryside (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.71-73 + 3 verses) as well as his erotic descriptions of the Mātaṅga *kāminīs* (temptresses) sent to seduce the king (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.92 + 23 verses). If we consider, as Gore and Ok point out, that Mukteśvar most likely presented his work in *kīrtan* or *paurāṇik* recitation (Gore and Ok 1977, xv),[87] it appears that his poem represents a turn towards worldly

[86] This passage includes seven unnumbered verses found in Deshpande and Varhadpande's manuscript but not in the *Navanīta* edition of the *Hariścandrākhyān*.

[87] Several verses in the *Hariścandrākhyān* support the notion that Mukteśvar performed as a *kīrtankār* or *purāṇik*. Initially, Nārad is described as coming to Hariścandra's court to perform *harikathā* (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.6), while Hariścandra's court is described as a place in which "the great King's heart became lightened with happiness by listening to wise eminent *ṛṣis* performing *kathās*, *kīrtans*, and *rāgas*" (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.5*). He then returns to heaven and performs a "*kīrtan*" of Hariścandra in Indra's

aesthetics within Marathi devotional performance traditions, during roughly the same time period as the simple religiosity of Tukārām (1598-1649) and the religious politics of Rāmdās (1608-1681),[88] and during the onset of the Marāṭhā consolidation of political resistance to Mughal and Sultanate power in the Deccan under Śivājī (1627-1680).[89] In the *Hariścandrākhyān*, Mukteśvar's representation of kingship fuses classical notions of what it means to be a king to the earlier *bhakti* ideals of Nāmdev and Janābāī.[90]

While Janābāī paints Hariścandra as the archetypical devotee, protecting his *sattva* as he loses everything and suffers through endless tortures (Bhingarkar 1989, 183), Mukteśvar makes him a paragon of royalty—a representation of nobility and perseverance. Unlike Janābāī's, his narrative begins with Nārad welcomed not in Indra's heaven, but in Hariścandra's court. After six verses of praise for Hariścandra and his "liberation-giving" city of Ayodhyā (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.1-6),[91] Nārad is given a warm and lavish courtly welcome, which Mukteśvar calls *vinaya-bhakti*—devotion through

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court (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.15). When Viśvāmitra creates the illusionary roadside "rest area [*pāṇapoī*]", it is a place where Mukteśvar describes *purāṇas* as being 'sung': "Due to *purāṇas* being sung and *dharma* being debated, and through descriptions of the qualities of God, the tired traveler here did not feel the winds of fatigue" (*Hariścandrākhyān* 2.203). The structure also indicates that each chapter was performed separately, with the final verses providing a 'teaser' of the events to come, much as *kīrtankārs* do today. Furthermore, given that his grandfather was Eknāth, the reformer and standardizer of *nāradīya kīrtan* (Pathak 1980, 30-31), it is plausible that Mukteśvar followed in his footsteps.

[88] Says Tulpule of Tukārām: "Tukārāma brings the sound of the beating of the Upaniṣadic artery to the ears of thefever-stricken modern world" (Tulpule 1979, 391). With regards to Rāmdās, he notes, "To establish what he called the *Mahārāṣṭra Dharma* was his aim and all his activities, whether spiritual or literary, were directed towards the fulfilment of this ideal" (Tulpule 1979, 395).

[89] While the "Hindu" aspects of Śivājī's resistance to the Sultanates and later to Aurangzeb remain controversial (Laine 2003) it seems clear that the non-Hindu nature of Mughal and Bahmani kingship in the Deccan was well-recognized in the literature of the time. Mukteśvar gives a clue to the identity issues facing Brahman orthodoxy, when Vasiṣṭha, responding to Viśvāmitra's vow of stealing Hariścandra's *sattva*, declares: "If this happens, it will be like the Vedas falling into the mouths of the Yavanas—my descendants will suffer in hell. I will throw away this top-knot and sacred thread into Kurukṣetra and beg like a low-caste" (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.29-30).

[90] For the relationship between kingship and classical aesthetics, see the work of Sheldon Pollock (Pollock 2001).

[91] He is described here as "the diadem of *satya* and *sattva*" (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.3), and "a giant mountain of fortitude and *sattva*" (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.4).

humility (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.12). Hariścandra bows to him, seats him, washes his feet with pure water, anoints him with musk, sandalwood, and saffron, and gives him a *naivedya* (blessed food) (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.9-12). Later, when Vasiṣṭha comes to Ayodhyā to warn him of Viśvāmitra's plot, Hariścandra engages in another lavish welcome (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.45-58).[92] Finally, in the story's conclusion, after Viśvāmitra stops Tārāmatī's execution, and takes them back to Ayodhyā, Mukteśvar engages in a lengthy and lavish description of Hariścandra's triumphant return (*Hariścandrākhyān* 5.473-480 + 9 unnumbered verses), emphasizing the thrills and delights of his citizens (*Hariścandrākhyān* 5.474) as the regal procession of umbrellas, palanquins, horses, chariots, instruments, warriors, *povādā* singers marched through the gates (*Hariścandrākhyān* 5.475). This sort of regalia is entirely absent in earlier *bhakti* versions.

Mukteśvar's extended accounts of the king's opulent wealth, combined with his noble charity and hospitality are clear departures from the spare accounts of royalty in the versions by the *bhakti* saints, and are more reminiscent, as we shall see, of Sanskrit literary works—particularly the tenth-century *Caṇḍakauśika*. One may conjecture that like his grandfather Eknāth (Tulpule 1979, 354-355), Mukteśvar was interested in reconciling classical and vernacular literatures, however, his failure to weave in any motifs from the purāṇic Hariścandra legend suggests the contrary. What seems more

[92] Here, Mukteśvar describes Hariścandra as "running hurriedly to the feet" of Vasiṣṭha and "doing *namaskār*," then seating him on a palanquin and carrying him into the city. Flags were raised on the rooftops of all the houses, cries of victory were shouted, and Vasiṣṭha was seated on a golden throne. Hariścandra and his family take the blessings of the sage by touching their heads to his feet, he does a 16-step *pūjā* of the sage with pure water in a golden vessel, puts an umbrella over his head, gives him water to rinse his mouth and feet, offers him fragrant garlands, sandalwood perfumes, blessed food, betel-nut, and pure water in a golden vessel (*Hariścandrākhyān* 1.45-50).

likely is that his work speaks to growing concerns in seventeenth-century Maharashtra about the restoration of dharmic kingship.

Scholars have noted the resistance of the landed aristocracy of Maharashtra (the Marāṭhā *sardārs* like the Nimbāḷkars, Ghorpaḍes, and Mores) to Śivājī's campaigns that would ultimately carve out a Marāṭhā empire (Laine 2003, 18-19). Mukteśvar, who most likely lived and worked prior to and during Śivājī's early years, works from a perspective divergent from Śivājī's martial spirit, articulating, through Hariścandra, a strategy of patience, forbearance, and self-devotion that offered a message of reassurance and hope to the dispossessed Marāṭhā kings serving as vassals in seventeenth-century Maharashtra, and perhaps more importantly, to a devotional audience increasingly interested in the worldly affairs of the court.[93] It is a picture that becomes quickly overshadowed, I believe, by the martial activities of Śivājī, but more importantly by Rāmdās, whose construction of *Maharāṣṭra Dharma*, a politicization of the religious sphere, offered aggressive and visionary solutions to the social and political problems of the day (see Schultz 2004).[94]

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[93] It is tempting to see a realworld parallel to Hariścandra in the life of Shahjī Bhonsle (1594-1664), the father of Śivājī. After serving under the kings of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur in the early seventeenth century, Shahjī built up a capital in Pune and resisted the aggressive advances of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592-1666) in the 1630s. As Sardesai explains, "The terrible experiences and indescribable sufferings, which Śivājī's shrews mother Jijabai had to pass during that period, left an indelible mark upon the tender mind of Śivājī" (Sardesai 1949, 57). Shahjī was eventually defeated in 1636 and entered into the services of the Adilshahi of Bijapur in what is now Karnataka.

[94] It therefore seems no accident that neither of the great *sant*-poets of Śivājī's time, Tukārām nor Rāmdās, take up the Hariścandra legend in any significant manner—this story quite simply was not useful for their discourses. After Mukteśvar, Hariścandra is not given significant literary treatment until the eighteenth century, when Śrīdhar and Moropant (1729-1794) produced versions of the legend, during the height of Peshwa rule in Maharashtra. The former's work was heavily influenced by Mukteśvar (Tulpule 1979, 407), and the latter, "the greatest of the poet-scholars" (Tulpule 1979, 422), was perhaps the most prolific writer of Marathi literature.

Two significant details emerge from our investigations into the life of the Hariścandra legend in Marathi literature and folklore. First, the legend's narrative structure generates a polyphony of discourses, in which, due to *varṇa* boundary-crossings, the discourse of *dharma* collapses, only to be restored to normalcy through the protagonists' individual and personal *bhakti*. This *bhakti* is conceptualized in the Marathi literary and performance tradition as *sattva* (truth-essence). It is surprising, however, to note that this word is not used in the Sanskrit versions of the Hariścandra legend, and instead, it is through *satya* (truth) that Hariścandra achieves redemption. While *satya* and *sattva* are sometimes synonymous, in śāstraic texts, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, *sattva* is widely recognized to be a Brahman *guṇa*, in contrast to Kṣatriya *rajas* or Vaiśya *tamas*; *satya* on the other hand, generally comes in opposition to *ṛta* as a dichotomy of personal vs. cosmic order (as discussed in Chapter Two). It is no accident, I believe, that the Marathi poets, *kīrtankārs*, and dramatists speak of *sattva*—for the ideal they construct is a king full of *sattva*, that is, a 'Brahman King' whose antagonist is a Brahman full of *rajas*, the 'Kṣatriya Brahman' Viśvāmitra.

II. The epic and purāṇic Hariścandra (MārkP 7-8; DBhP 7.17-27)

There are surprisingly few versions of the Hariścandra legend in Sanskrit prior to Kṣemīśvara's tenth-century drama. Though Mukteśvar places his telling in the *Vanaparvan* of his Marathi rendition of the *Mahābhārata*, the legend is not narrated in either epic.[95] The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*, one of only two purāṇic texts giving lengthy

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[95] Hariścandra is praised in the *Mahābharata* as a *rājarṣi* (*Mbh* 2.11.47-65), however, the legend is not told. It is arguable, however, that the Cyavana-Kuśika episode in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mbh* 13.55-56) is a variation

tellings, has been dated to the eleventh or twelfth centuries; the other is the *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, a text that has been consistently regarded as "one of the oldest and most important of the extant Purāṇas" (Das Gupta 1962, lxii) and dated to the third or fourth century (Hazra 1975, 8-13), due to its regularity of features characteristic of the purāṇic genre (the *pañcalakṣaṇa*), and its orderly supplemental nature to the *Mahābhārata*. The Hariścandra legend is told here to answer a question about why the Pāṇḍaveyas (or Draupadeyas—the five sons of Draupadī) died so young. It turns out that they were in fact incarnations of the five Viśvedevas (the vedic world-protector divinities) who questioned Viśvāmitra's behavior towards Hariścandra, and were therefore cursed by the sage to suffer a short human birth.[96] As the Mārkaṇḍeya tells it, when Hariścandra and his wife were leaving Ayodhyā, the townspeople implored them to stay, and so the king stood still, feeling sympathy towards his subjects (*MārkP* 7.56).[97] Viśvāmitra became irate and urged him along, and Hariścandra began to move. But "as he was dragging his wife along, that lovely girl suffering in exertion, Kauśika beat her again and again with a stick of wood. King Hariścandra, seeing her beaten and torn by grief, said, 'I am going!' and spoke nothing more" (*MārkP* 7.60-61).

At this point, the Viśvedevas appeared and objected to Viśvāmitra's behavior: "This sinful Viśvāmitra, what worlds shall he possibly attain? He has uprooted this preeminent sacrificer from his own kingdom! Now praised by whose faith, through

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of the Hariścandra tale-type. The *Nalopākhyana*, also a variant of AT 939, is of course prominent in the *Mahābhārata*.

[96] Thus the first *adhyāya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* Hariścandra legend is entitled "The Story of the Origin of the Draupadeyas."

[97] Their lament emphasizes the conflict of *dharma* that the king faces: "You are devoted to *dharma*," they cry, "and so you should always act in the interest of your citizens" (*MārkP* 7.46). "Stay! Stay, greatest king, and maintain your *svadharma*. Mercy in particular is the highest *dharma* of Kṣatriyas" (*MārkP* 7.53).

whose *mantras* and so on, will we drink the pure soma in the great sacrifice and become happy" (*MārkP* 7.62cd-63)? Voiced by a set of deities who personify, in a sense, the normative Vedic sacrifice, the statement clearly is an articulation of orthodox Brahman sentiment against the sage's actions.[98] Viśvāmitra angrily curses the Viśvedevas to "undergo manhood" (*MārkP* 7.64d), though he eases the force of his curse: "Though you shall become human, you will still not have any further offspring. You shall not have a large set of wives, nor will you experience jealousy. Freed of lust and anger, you will again become gods" (*MārkP* 7.65cd-66).

The Draupadeya curse, foregrounded in the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, reappears in several later versions, most notably Ksemīśvara's *Caṇḍakauśika* and then Bharatendu's Hindi adaptation. In the latter two, however, the Draupadeya curse motif appears not at the gates of Ayodhyā but in the Kāśī slave market.[99] This displacement from Ayodhyā to Vārāṇasī serves to resituate the socio-religious implications of the Viśvedevas. That is, in the *Caṇḍakauśika* the gods are backgrounded as incidental, off-stage victims of Viśvāmitra's out-of-control *tapas*, while the king is rescued by the god Dharma, disguised as a Caṇḍāla.[100] In the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, however, the curse is foregrounded, and is

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[98] The scene bears great resemblance to the condemnation of Viśvāmitra's sacrifice for the Caṇḍāla Triśaṅku in the *Rāmāyaṇa* by the sons of Vasiṣṭha, and Viśvāmitra's subsequent cursing them into Śvapacahood.

[99] In Act Three of the *Caṇḍakauśika*, after Śaibyā and Rohitāśva are sold but Viśvāmitra is unsatisfied with the partial repayment of his *dakṣiṇā*, "the Viśve-devas, from behind the scenes, condemn, while traveling in their aerial chariot, the heartlessness of the Kauśika in reducing Hariścandra to such a wretched plight. Thus provoked, the angry sage curses them to be born as men, and to be killed by Droṇa's son while still young" (Das Gupta 1962, lvi).

[100] The scene is clearly represented as a *varṇa* conflict: the Visvedevas' condemnation of Viśvāmitra and his *tapas* is voiced offstage: "Damn your *tapas*! Damn your vows! Damn your knowledge! Damn you, famed Brahman, who has taken Hariścandra into this misfortune [*dhik tapo dhig vratam idaṁ dhig jñānaṁ dhig bahuśrutaṁ, nītavān asi yad brahman hariścandraṁ imāṁ daśām*]" (*CK* 3.27), while Viśvāmitra, in a rage, responds: "Damn you ignorant fools [*anātmajñāḥ*], on account of your taking the side of this

indeed the reason why the narrative is inserted into the *purāṇa* in the first place. The rest of the Hariścandra legend is told in the next chapter (*MārkP* 8), only when Jaimini, who had asked the question, insists on hearing more about Hariścandra (*MārkP* 8.2) and asks his raconteurs, a group of birds, to tell the rest of the story.

On the level of narrative, the Draupadeya curse motif creates a linkage between the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and the *Mahābhārata* resembling the process of secondary epic formation that Alf Hiltebeitel terms "reenplotment." Hiltebeitel argues that this relationship of supplementarity between the medieval regional epics and the Sanskrit epic narratives is indicative of the changing religious and political spheres in the regions that produced the oral epics in the medieval period (Hiltebeitel 1999b). Oral epics present themselves as 'sequels' to the epics, chronicling events taking place within post-*Mahābhārata* royal lineages; grounded in specific regions, they thereby constructed regional identities. In the same way, telling this story perhaps for the first time in Sanskrit, the *Mārkaṇḍeya* attempts to legitimize a folk tradition from the Ayodhyā-Vārāṇasī region, by giving it classical sanction.[101]

On the other hand, the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* Hariścandra legend explains events prior to both classical epics, in a different yuga, and is a 'prequel' or 'preenplotment.' The Draupadeya curse allows the supplemental purāṇic text to reinterpret the epic, offering a

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wretched Kṣatriya! All five of you shall be born into a Kṣatriya womb, and then the Brahman son of Droṇa will slay you" (*CK* 3.28)!

[101] By the time enters the Marathi *bhakti* tradition, the legend has acquired a number of motifs—Hariścandra's giving away the kingdom in a dream, Viśvāmitra's tortures along the road to Kāśī—that are likely later developments. We may therefore hypothesize that the narrative began as a local legendary tradition in the Ayodhyā-Vārāṇasī region and spread towards the west, perhaps at the zenith of Yādava political power in the early centuries of the second millennium. Though a historic-geographic analysis is necessary to properly determine the time and place of this legend's origin and the directions of its diffusion, we may note that the Hariścandra legend is granted prominent place in the medieval *Ayodhyā-māhātmya* (Bakker 1986).

new understanding of the villainy of the Brahman Aśvatthāmā, the *Mahābhārata* character who, along with the Kṣatriyas Kṛpa and Kṛtavarmā, slays the Kṣatriya children in the Pāṇḍava camp in the middle of the night during the *Sauptika Parvan*. Through the curse motif, Aśvatthāmā's un-Brahmanic cruelty is displaced onto Viśvāmitra. The narrative then deals with Viśvāmitra's villainy in two ways—through Hariścandra's *bhakti* and, as we shall see, Vasiṣṭha's direct confrontation. In other words, this textual performance is an immersion. By linking Aśvatthāmā's behavior to Viśvāmitra's villainy, the *purāṇa* injects a scene of horrific cruelty taken from the epic into the folk Hariścandra storyworld, legitimizing a new, folk religious discourse (*bhakti*) as being able to come to terms with epic injustices resulting from the transgressions of *varṇa*, which *dharma* alone cannot sufficiently reconcile.

The other motif of note in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* version is Hariścandra's dream, unique to this purāṇic telling and rather distinct from his dream in the Marathi versions. When he began work in the cremation grounds as a remover of garments from corpses, Hariścandra did not sleep for twelve months, until finally, exhausted, the king's "haggard limbs grew still, and he went to sleep" (*MārkP* 8.131). While asleep in the cremation grounds, Hariścandra had an astonishing (*adbhuta*) dream:

> He was first born in the womb of a Pulkasa [an Untouchable] (*MārkP* 8.133-135). When he was seven years of age, he approached a Brahman family who had brought a corpse there. Offended, they told him, "Evil doer, you act wickedly and inauspiciously. Long ago, King Hariścandra was made into a Pulkasa by Viśvāmitra, and his merit had been destroyed due to his disturbance of the Brahmans' sleep" (*MārkP* 8.138-139). The offended Brahmans then sent the Pulkasa boy [Hariścandra] to hell (*MārkP* 8.139-140). In his dream-state, Hariścandra then saw "Yama's servants, bearing nooses, the harbingers of fear," who "seized his soul, and forcefully started to take it away" (*MārkP* 8.141). After suffering through seven years of innumerable tortures—pots of oil (*MārkP* 8.142), razor-sharp saw blades, blinding darkness, eating pus and shit (*MārkP* 8.143),

> being beaten, squeezed dry, burned, and blasted by freezing winds (*MārkP* 8.145), he was thrown back to earth "born as a shit-eating, vomit-eating dog, who became frostbitten and died after only one month" (*MārkP* 8.147).
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> Undergoing reincarnations through a series of low-status creatures, "the King at some point saw himself born into his own family" (*MārkP* 8.151).[102] Then, "as he lived there, his kingdom was lost through the dice. His wife was lost and his son, and he then went into the forest alone. There, he saw a lion with a gaping maw, producing great fear, who, along with a śarabha, was approaching, wishing to eat him up" (*MārkP* 8.152-153).
>
> Unfortunately, the lion ate him. Dead, Hariścandra then had a brief vision of his wife, as she lamented: "Save me, Hariścandra! What good has your gambling done, my Lord?" (*MārkP* 8.155). Next, Hariścandra saw himself in heaven, and his wife in 'purgatory' (*antarīkṣa*) being led away by force, "shaven-headed and naked" (*MārkP* 8.157).[103] He was then taken into custody by Yama, who explained to him what Viśvāmitra had done to him: "Kauśika will even mandate your son's death. Return now to the human world, and endure the rest of your suffering. When it has passed, King, then you will have good fortune" (*MārkP* 8.164).

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty offers a detailed discussion of how variants of this dream-sequence, (especially in the *Yogavasiṣṭha*) project *anuloma* (with the grain) inter-varṇa movements into the dream-world. In this version, Hariścandra 'sees himself' suffer a Caṇḍala existence, as he is resisting the transformation in real life. However, when he wakes, he is unsure whether or not the twelve years of his dream have actually passed (*MārkP* 8.167).[104] After praying to the gods (*MārkP* 8.169-171), Hariścandra immerses

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[102] He then saw himself incarnate as an ass, then an elephant, a monkey, then a bull. Then as a goat, a cat, a heron, a cow, a bird; then a worm, a mockingbird, as inanimate beings (i.e., trees), as a serpent, and other such creatures (*MārkP* 8.148-149).

[103] This scene is I believe a distorted allusion to the Nala legend that not only acknowledges the genetic relationship between these two subtypes of AT 939, but also adds another intertext between the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Due to its gambling motif, Nala is the central story in the *Mahābhārata's* subnarrative tradition, offering an alternative perspective on the Pāṇḍava's loss and exile. Its inclusion here suggests that the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa's* composition involved a scholarly analysis of the tale-type resemblances of Hariścandra and Nala.

[104] The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* presents this metaphysical issue as undecidable: "I have seen suffering in this dream for which no end is found," declares Hariścandra. "'I saw it in my dream, but have twelve years really passed for me?' Because of his confusion, he asked some of the Pulkasas who were around, 'Have

himself in his new Caṇḍāla life, forgetting about his past: "Again he collected fees for corpses, as if his memory were erased" (*MārkP* 8.172). Through this play on reality, memory, and illusion, the text narrates a loss of personal history—what the dreamer (and the purāṇic audience) presumes is dreamt (and therefore unreal) 'spills out' of the dream frame into reality. Hariścandra dreams of his son's death and his wife's suffering only to find that it has actually happened, as she soon comes to the burning grounds with their dead son. What results is a complete loss of identity—Hariścandra loses his *varṇa*, his family, his progeny, and almost, but not quite, his body.

The *Mārkaṇḍeya's* dream sequence, I suggest, involves a Brahman attempt to understand the realities of non-Brahman life. In the midst of 'real' suffering, as a king forced to do Caṇḍāla activities, Hariścandra experiences twelve years of 'imagined' torture in rebirth and hell; these scenes are all a part of normative purāṇic discourse. However, when this illusory suffering spills out of the dream into Hariścandra's real existence, it raises a fundamental question, as Doniger notes, about reality. Is human suffering real? Unlike the *Yogavasiṣṭha's* Vedāntic doctrines that do tackle the problem, the *purāṇa* cannot answer this question, and offers instead a way to cope with suffering through *bhakti*.

A dream motif also occurs in the Marathi tellings, as we have noted, though it comes in the forest scene of Ayodhyā as a strategem through which Viśvāmitra takes his kingdom. In some versions he also then sees "a novel vision of the Kāḷa-puruṣa [literally, 'The Time-man,' meaning Yama] standing behind him *[eka navala dṛṣṭī kāḷapuruṣa*

[twelve years] passed?' Some who were there said 'No,' while some others replied 'Yes' (*MārkP* 8.167-168).

ubhā pāṭhī̃]" (Janābāī 438.10). This Kāḷa-puruṣa tries to brain him: "taking an iron club in his hand, he tried to place it into his skull [*lohadaṇḍa gheunī̃ karī̃ ghālū̃ pāhe tyāce śirī̃*]" (Janābāī 438.11). While lacking the distorted images and time-stretching of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*'s intricate dream sequence, the Marathi versions' dream nonetheless involves a 'spilling out' of dreamworld into realworld when Viśvāmitra actually comes to collect his gift.

In both dreams, Hariścandra's nightmare becomes reality—in the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, the king becomes an Untouchable, while in the Marathi versions, the Brahman becomes King. In both cases, dream-world events become real, but in different discursive spheres. The *Mārkaṇḍeya* places the dream motif in the *bhakti* sphere of Vārāṇasī, and creates a situation in which the nightmarish collapse of his social status is solved through *satya*. When the dream motif is in the dharmic sphere of Ayodhyā, it creates a scenario in which the king is pushed out of Kṣatriya domesticity and a Brahman takes ownership of the kingdom, and there is a 'failure' in *dharma*.

Unlike most folk versions, the classical versions end with Hariścandra's ascension to heaven, along with his entire city of Ayodhyā, due to his generous sharing of *puṇya* (merit). However, the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* story does not quite end here, for there is still the leftover question of Viśvāmitra's guilt. The *Mārkāṇḍeya* does not begin with Nārada's praise of Hariścandra in Indra's court, it does not detail the wager between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha over the nobility of the latter's disciple, and indeed gives little indication of why Viśvāmitra is doing what he is doing. He is simply a villain, and it is only in a supplemental narrative (*MārkP* 9) that the matter is addressed, as Vasiṣṭha angrily confronts Viśvāmitra over his abusive behavior.

In the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* telling, when Hariścandra goes to heaven, Vasiṣṭha hears of his torments (*MārkP* 9.2-3). Feeling compassion towards the king, and responsibility to avenge his ill-treatment (*MārkP* 9.7), Vasiṣṭha angrily curses Viśvāmitra, his "enemy Brahman" (*MārkP* 9.9) to become a *baka* (a type of crane). Viśvāmitra, however, places a counter-curse (*pratiśāpa*) on Vasiṣṭha, turning him into an *āḍi*, another type of waterfowl. What follows is the curious *āḍi-baka* battle, in which the two sages engage in an extended physical conflict in the form of gigantic birds, and once again threaten the stability of the cosmos.

The *Āḍi-Baka* battle (*MārkP* 9, *DBhP* 6.12-13)

The story of Viśvāmitra's and Vasiṣṭha's cosmic stalemate as feuding birds appears in two extant purāṇic sources: the *Mārkaṇḍeya* (*MārkP* 9) and *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (6.12.23-35 and 6.13.30-51); both juxtapose it with the legend of Hariścandra. It is not told in the epics, but there are allusions to the *āḍi-baka* battle in purāṇic texts, most notably in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, which declares that "Hariścandra was the son of Triśaṅku, and on his account arose a battle between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, as birds, for many years" (*BhāgP* 9.7.7).[105] An entertaining story, which due to its animal protagonists might even be deemed a fable, though it does not resemble any of the types of animal tales in Laurits Bødker's index (Bodker 1957), the *āḍi-baka* story has nonetheless been almost unanimously dismissed as fantastic, irrelevant, and late.

Despite their mutual bird-curses, the two sages kept fighting. The *Mārkaṇḍeya* describes the war in gory detail:

[105] Allusions to this tale are also found in the *Caṇḍakauśika* and in medieval Sanskrit *kathā* literature.

> The *āḍi* flew up for two thousand *yojanās*, and, Brahman, the *baka* [flew up] for three thousand and ninety six. Those two of great majesty, attacked one another with blows of their wings, and created great alarm among the people. Shaking his wings, the *baka*, his eyes covered in red, struck at the *āḍi*; he too, with upraised neck, beat the *baka* with his feet. (*MārkP* 9.13-15)

The conflict of the two birds, like most of Viśvāmitra's other activities, is yet another narrativization of conflict between normative and counter-normative, and again creates a situation in which the stability of the world is threatened (*MārkP* 9.16-19).[106] Brahmā descends, out of concern for the welfare of the world, and restores the two sages to human form (*MārkP* 9.21-25). As in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Brahmā urges them to abandon their hostilities, which has forced them into a dark (*tāmasa*) existence (*MārkP* 9.26). To solve the problem of guilt, the god reasons that "this is all a consequence of King Hariścandra's *rājasūya*—this battle between you two that is bringing about the end of the earth. Moreover, the greatest of Kauśikas here has not transgressed against the king. Brahman, as the one who brought about his ascension into heaven, he remains in a very munificent position" (*MārkP* 9.27-28). With this statement, the *āḍi-baka* legend offers a Brahman-centered reassessment of the sage's villainy, suggesting that like his assistance to Triśaṅku, Viśvāmitra is to be lauded for helping Hariścandra into heaven, though the *purāṇa* has spent over three hundred verses in the preceding two chapters giving no indication that Viśvāmitra is anything but a villain. In this way, the *āḍi-baka* story clearly acts as a Brahman normativization—a purāṇic attempt to reconcile Viśvāmitra as 'enemy-Brahman' with his notoriety as a powerful, vedic sage.

[106] "Catching the wind from their wings, mountains fell to the earth, and struck by the falling mountains, the earth quaked. The quaking earth agitated the ocean's waters, and facing in the direction of the path to hell, she bowed to one knee. And creatures met their deaths—some by falling mountains, some by the movements of the earth, some by the spraying waters. And so the entire world became agitated, thrown into perplexion, dispirited, and the sphere of the earth was thrown asunder" (*MārkP* 9.16-19).

Through Brahmā's explanation that the hostilities are a result of Hariścandra's sacrifice, the *Mārkaṇḍeya's āḍi-baka* story constructs another intertext with the *Mahābharata*. As noted earlier, Hariścandra does not appear at all in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, not even in the Ikṣvāku royal genealogies, and appears only once in the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Sabhā Parvan*, Nārada describes him to Yudhiṣṭhira as the "only *rājarṣi* who eternally dwells in Indra's court" (*Mbh* 2.11.48), having arrived there due to his extraordinary *rājasūya* (*Mbh* 2.11.47-65). In particular, the epic describes in detail how, during the rite, Hariścandra lavished gifts, wealth, food, and jewels onto Brahmans (*Mbh* 2.11.57-59).

The *Mahābhārata* embeds this description of Hariścandra's *rājasūya* at a moment in which Yudhiṣṭhira is himself about to perform this Vedic ritual. Through Nārada's subnarrative, the epic actively compares the normative power of the *rājasūya* ritual with the counter-normative power of *tapas*, the other way to get to Indra's heaven.[107] The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa's* Hariścandra legend valorizes *bhakti,* and not ritual or *tapas*, as the means of coping with human suffering, but recuperates this *bhakti* with ritual and *tapas* in the *āḍi-baka* aftermath, urging, as Brahma says, that "there is plenty of Brahmanic power" to go around (*MārkP* 9.29) for both (normative) Vasiṣṭha and (counter-normative) Viśvāmitra.

The *Devībhāgavata's* telling of the *āḍi-baka* legend is practically identical with the *Mārkaṇḍeya's*, though it leaves out the violent details of their battle. The *Devībhāgavata* tells the *āḍi-baka* story during a discussion of the efficacy of *tīrthas*, declaring the importance of 'purity of heart,' without which "*tīrthas*, charity, *tapas*,

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[107] And so the *Mahābhārata* states: "Other kings who perform the great *rājasūya* rites also enjoy the company of Indra, Bhārata" (*Mbh* 2.11.62), and later: "Those who have shed their body through *tapas*, they too reach his abode, appearing eternally prosperous" (*Mbh* 2.11.64).

whatever that truly brings about righteousness—all are meaningless" (*DBhP* 6.13.51). "*Tīrthas* are able to cleanse the pollution from the body," claims Vyāsa, "but they are unable to cleanse the heart" (*DBhP* 6.12.23-24). In fact, "neither the Vedas, the *śāstras*, *vratas*, *tapas*, sacrifices nor charity can purify the heart" (*DBhP* 6.12.28). To illustrate this failure, Vyāsa narrates how "the great, meaningless *āḍi-baka* battle occurred due to this hatred between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha" (*DBhP* 6.12.30). In doing so, the *Devībhāgavata* also interjects into this story the Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa legends (*DBhP* 6.12-13), both of which this *purāṇa* elaborately retells as sequels to the Triśaṅku legend (*DBhP* 7.13-19). After describing the sages' mutual bird-curses (*DBhP* 6.12.31-34), the *Devībhāgavata* interjects a brief version of the Śunaḥśepa legend (*DBhP* 6.12.37-74; 6.13.1-30). Then the *Devībhāgavata* gives the opening scenes the Hariścandra story.

Viśvāmitra, upset that Hariścandra had not heeded his advice about sparing Śunaḥśepa (*DBhP* 6.13.30), disguised himself as a Brahman and demanded his entire kingdom as Hariścandra was out hunting along the Kauśikī river (*DBhP* 6.13.31). At that moment, Vasiṣṭha angrily appeared and questioned Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood:

> You lowly Kṣatriya, you wicked one, foolish wearer of Brahman clothes, hypocrite, behaving like a thieving *baka*, why are you acting so foolishly vain? Villain, why have you, without provocation, made my master, this great King, suffer so greatly? Since you are thinking so much like a thieving *baka*, let you become a *baka*! (*DBhP* 6.13.34-36)

Vasiṣṭha's challenge to Viśvāmitra's Brahmanhood is striking, for it is the only instance where Viśvāmitra's Brahman status is questioned in the numerous versions of the Hariścandra legend, at least partially, for when the two sages curse one another and engage in battle, the plight of Hariścandra is left unnarrated and forgotten.

Through this fusion, the *Devībhāgavata* reorganizes a set of Viśvāmitra legends that are found rather nebulously in medieval folk narrative traditions: the *āḍi-baka* story, Hariścandra, Śunaḥśepa, Hariścandra's *rājasūya*. By attaching the *āḍi-baka* legend to Hariścandra, the *Devībhāgavata* seeks to bring meaning to the 'meaninglessness' of these legends, and the meaning it advocates is quite new in the early second millennium. Consistently throughout its lengthy narration of the Viśvāmitra legends, the *Devībhāgavata* downplays the religious efficacy of Vedic ritual, *tapas*, and *tīrtha*, casting its religious spotlight instead on the saving grace of the Goddess. The movement away from ritual power to *devī-bhakti* is best seen, however, in the *Devībhāgavata's* unique attachment of Śunaḥśepa to the Hariścandra legend. Though the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* mentions that Viśvāmitra's harassment of Hariścandra was due to the latter's *rājasūya* sacrifice, it will be clear that this rite could not be identical to the human sacrifice involved in the Śunaḥśepa legend. Furthermore, in no vernacular or folk version of Hariścandra, and not even in the *Caṇḍakauśika*, is Śunaḥśepa even mentioned. As we shall discover, the means through which the *Devībhāgavata* weaves these two distinct legends together is perhaps the most significant textual performance of the Viśvāmitra legends, immersing *bhakti* discourse into a Vedic system of religiosity.

III. The Vedic Śunaḥśepa (AB 7.13-18, ŚSS 15.20-21)

The legend of Śunaḥśepa appears to be the most ancient of legends involving Viśvāmitra, and by far the most thoroughly scrunitized by Indological scholarship. Apart from the relationship of the Kalmāṣapāda story to Viśvāmitra's priesthood of Sudās, it is

the only Vedic narrative of Viśvāmitra also told in the epic and purāṇic corpus.[108] Found in its most extended form in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (7.13-18) and the *Sāṅkhyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* (15.20-21), the Śunaḥśepa legend is told in Vedic literature as an explanation of the origins of the hymns revealed to Śunaḥśepa during his ordeal, as well as new *soma*-pressing techniques attributed to him.[109] Most epic and purāṇic tellings of the Śunaḥśepa legend, aside from the notable exception of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are practically identical in plot to the *Aitareya's* account, which proceeds as follows:

> The king Hariścandra, son of Vedhas, propitiated the god Varuṇa for a son at the behest of Nārada, offering to sacrifice him upon birth. Varuṇa agreed, and Rohita was born, but the king repeatedly stalled the sacrifice. When he finally agreed to Varuṇa's demands, the boy, now of age, learned of his fate and ran away to the forest. An irate Varuṇa cursed Hariścandra to succumb to a stomach illness. Hearing of his father's plight, Rohita tried repeatedly to return and be sacrificed, but Indra, assuming the guise of a Brahman, dissuaded him each time.
>
> After six years, Rohita encountered the starving Brahman Ajīgarta, son of Suyavasa, in the forest. Ajīgarta had three sons, named Śunaḥpuccha, Śunaḥśepa, and Śunolāṅgula, and Rohita offered him a hundred cows for one of them. The parents bargained to sell the middle son, Śunaḥśepa, whom Rohita brought to his father as a sacrificial substitute.
>
> As the sacrifice proceeded, no one was willing to bind the boy to the sacrificial post, or to kill him, until Ajīgarta offered to do the job for an additional fee. Just as he was about to kill him, Śunaḥśepa spontaneously chanted the *Ṛg Veda* hymns that now bear his seership, and was miraculously released from his fetters. Hariścandra was also freed from his illness and was presented a golden chariot as a gift. Śunaḥśepa was praised, Hariścandra forgiven, and the sacrifice ended successfully without the killing the Brahman victim.

Though it initially appears vastly different from the Hariścandra legend, there is much that is syntagmatically equivalent between the two stories. Like the Hariścandra legend's movement from Ayodhyā to Kāśī, there are three distinct moves in the

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[108] Kalmāṣapāda is said to be the son of Sudās in the *purāṇas* (see Sarma 1987, 70).

[109] We find allusions to the legend in *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 5.2.1.3, *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā* 19.11, *Kapīṣṭhala-Kaṭha Saṁhitā* 21.1, *Atharva Veda Saṁhitā* 6.25 and 7.83, *Nirukta* 3.4, *Bṛhaddevatā*, and the *Sarvānukramaṇi*. See Hariyappa 1953 for a complete discussion of the references to Śunaḥśepa in Vedic literature.

Aitareya's telling of Śunaḥśepa. First, the king Hariścandra's broken promise of a child sacrifice to Varuṇa is equivalent to the king's giving away his kingdom. In both cases, the event takes place in the palace, Kṣatriya domesticity is lost, and the king is made homeless. The second move involves Ajīgarta's sale of his son to Rohita in the forest, and is equivalent to Hariścandra's journey to Kāśī and selling his family into slavery. The third move is Śunaḥśepa's deliverance through the power of *mantra* as his own father is about to kill him, equivalent to Hariścandra's salvation in the burning grounds as he is about to kill his wife. Thematically, both are narratives of a villainous abuse of normativity (by either Viśvāmitra or Hariścandra), and how an individual (either Hariścandra or Śunaḥśepa) struggles to cope, and is finally rescued (by either *bhakti* or *mantra*).

Intriguingly, no scholar has taken up a comparative study of these two legends, either dismissing the Hariścandra legend as a later, purāṇic corruption of the Vedic 'original' Śunaḥśepa, or ignoring it completely. While Horace Hyman Wilson seems to have been the first Western scholar to take note of the Śunaḥśepa legend in his study of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Rudolph Roth published a landmark study in 1848, and a host of Indologists had already tackled the history and meaning of this legend by the turn of the twentieth century. Along with textual criticism, the central interpretive focus of this early scholarship was the historicity of human sacrifice, and accordingly, Indological analysis of Śunaḥśepa restricted itself to reconstructing history from the most archaic Vedic narratives.[110] While twentieth century scholars, most notably H. L. Hariyappa (Hariyappa

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[110] Müller, while acknowledging that "it does not necessarily follow from this legend that the Rishis, the authors of the Vedic hymns, offered human sacrifices," nonetheless asserted that "human sacrifices are not incompatible with a higher state of civilization, particularly among people who never doubted the

1953), strove to understand Śunaḥśepa's epic and purāṇic forms as deteriorations from its more pristine form in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, they continued to marginalize the Hariścandra legend.[111] Rather than treating Hariścandra as simply a purāṇic fabrication, I would like to suggest that a dialogue takes place between the purāṇic (and folk) story of Hariścandra and the Vedic story of Śunaḥśepa.

Because they are functional equivalents, these two legends offer two distinct visions—one Vedic and one folk—of how *varṇa* affects the individual, and the means through which he may cope with it. In the case of Hariścandra, *bhakti* allows the king to endure a Brahman's harassment, while in the case of Vedic Śunaḥśepa, it is through Vedic *mantra* that the Brahman survives being sacrificed by a king.[112] These visions are produced, again, through narrative mappings of *varṇa* onto domestic spaces. Thus, while Hariścandra loses his Kṣatriya domesticity, Śunaḥśepa is sold out of his Brahman domestic space, and after the failed sacrifice, the restoration of Brahman domesticity to this child becomes the śāstraically debated issue among the Brahmans present at the sacrifice.[113] Indeed, the major śāstraic fallout from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa's* telling appears to be Śunaḥśepa's change of *gotra*, since both Ajīgarta's sale of his own son and Viśvāmitra's adoption of the boy become illustrations of *āpad-dharma* behavior in later

immortality of the soul, and at the same time felt a craving to offer whatever seemed most valuable on earth to the gods whom they believed" (Müller 1860, 419).

[111] "Popular impression now," notes Hariyappa, "is that Viśvāmitra was a cruel sage and all that. How different from the Vedic Viśvāmitra" (Hariyappa 1953, 320, note 309). This distortion of "TRUTH [*sic*]", he believes, has been brought about "by unbridled tradition, by the unscrupulous story-teller of [*sic*] Harikathā-performer, or even by the high handed poet" (Hariyappa 1953, 320, note 309).

[112] The post-Vedic Śunaḥśepa legends reinterpret the cause of his survival in important ways that we will discuss below.

[113] Śunaḥśepa, of his own accord, sits down in Viśvāmitra's lap. Ajīgarta demands he be returned, while Viśvāmitra argues against this, pointing out that Ajīgarta has tried to kill his own son. Viśvāmitra then promises that Śunaḥśepa will, upon adoption, be treated as his eldest son, foremost in the family hierarchy; when his fifty eldest object, Viśvāmitra curses them to be outcastes—"the most wretched *dasyus*."

dharma texts. In fact, the more important social category in the *Aitareya's* telling seems not to be *varṇa*, as Viśvāmitra is shown to be both a king and Brahman, but family.[114]

Śunaḥśepa in the epics (*Rām* 1.60-61, *Mbh* 13.3.6-8)

While the *Mahābhārata* does contain references to Śunaḥśepa, the most influential and detailed Sanskrit version of this legend is found in the *Bālakāṇḍa* of the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*.[115] It comes immediately after Śatānanda tells Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa about Triśaṅku in Viśvāmitra's mini-epic, as "the great king of Ayodhyā known as Ambarīṣa commenced a sacrifice" (*Rām* 1.60.5).

There are several major discrepancies between the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Vedic versions of this legend that led Frederick Eden Pargiter to deem the epic telling a "glaring Brahmanic fable," that prompted Rudolph Roth to hypothesize two distinct versions (in the *Aitareya* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) of an original Vedic "immolation legend" (Roth 1846), and which compelled Umesh Chandra Sharma, in his "exhaustive study" of Viśvāmitra, to assert that Valmīki "might have taken into consideration the changed form of the legend which must have been current in his contemporary society as a folk-tale" (Sharma 1975, 144). Not least of these, is the discrepancy of names: Hariścandra is now Ambarīṣa, and Ajīgarta is Ṛcīka. Furthermore, the subnarrative of Hariścandra's (or rather, Ambarīṣa's) broken promise to Varuṇa to sacrifice his son is omitted. In fact, Rohita is missing altogether. Finally, Viśvāmitra's adoption of Śunaḥśepa into his family, the climax of the

[114] This is supported by the observation that most purāṇic allusions to Śunaḥśepa, placed at the end of the Satyavatī legend, are concerned with *gotra*.

[115] The *Mahābhārata's* brief account is a part of Yudhiṣṭhira' query in the *Anuśāsana Parvan*, discussed in Chapter One (*Mbh* 13.3.6-8). Hariyappa has pointed out this bare account, by noting that Śunaḥśepa's father was Ṛcīka and that his sacrificer is Hariścandra, is intimately connected with both the *Aitareya* and *Rāmāyaṇa* tellings (Hariyappa 1953, 209-210), while Narahari argued that the *Mahābhārata* telling is a separate, third "recension" distinct from the *Aitareya* and *Rāmāyaṇa* tellings (Narahari 1941, 307).

Aitareya and the reason why it is told in many purāṇic texts, does not explicitly take place, though Viśvāmitra does curse his fifty elder sons, when they refuse to serve as substitutes for Śunaḥśepa in the sacrifice.[116]

Most scholars have duly noted that the Viśvāmitra's cursing his fifty elder sons, and not Ambarīṣa's human sacrifice, is the climax of the *Rāmāyaṇa* telling.[117] For White, the curse represents a "dramatic explanation" for "the origins and existence of the fallen or exiled races of dog-cookers on the periphery of society and human categories" (White 1992, 72). In other words, the legend works to reinforce classical *varṇa* structure, providing "an alternative to the more common legalistic explanations of marginalization through miscegenation" (White 1992, 72). Robert Goldman reads the Śvapaca-curse as a symbolic maneuver, noting that "the passivity of the ideal Indian son is put to its ultimate test. The father now no longer asks merely for an act of deference and self-abnegation; he orders the sons to commit suicide" (Goldman 1978, 349). In order to understand how the Śvapaca curse works, however, we must take two additional details of the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Śunaḥśepa legend into consideration, both of which rely on an assumption that the epic is intentionally trying to tell the story differently from the Vedic versions.[118]

First, Viśvāmitra is credited as teaching Śunaḥśepa the Vedic *mantras* to be recited during the sacrifice. In the *Aitareya*, Śunaḥśepa uttered these on his own, while

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[116] This scene includes a motif similar to the Vedic version: While Ambarīṣa is taking him to the sacrifice, Śunaḥśepa recognizes his maternal uncle performing *tapas* and jumps into his lap, begging the sage to rescue him (*Rām* 1.61.4,6).

[117] The medieval *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators provide a traditional basis for this sort of interpretation. A careful reading of later Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇas*, such as the *Campū-Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as the *Mahābhārata's* synopsis at *Mbh* 13.3.6-8 (see below), further supports the notion that the most memorable event is Viśvāmitra's curse.

[118] This contrasts with Sharma's idea that the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling is a folk survival. To account for textual divergence, Sharma claims: "some decent form of a narrative changes its colour when it goes into the mouths of the common-folks" (Sharma 1975, 144).

here it is Viśvāmitra who gives him "two divine songs [*gāthe dve divye*]" to sing during Ambarīṣa's sacrifice (*Rām* 1.61.19).[119] Second, Viśvāmitra's curse in the *Rāmāyaṇa* includes a linguistic transformation from the *Aitareya*, in which he curses his fifty eldest sons to become *dasyus* for refusing to submit to Śunaḥśepa's primacy. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, they are cursed to be Śvapacas, because of their flippant reply to their father's request to take Śunaḥśepa's place as sacrificial victim: "Forsaking your sons, why are you coming to the aid of someone else's son, Lord? We feel this should not be done, for it is tantamount to eating dogmeat" (*Rām* 1.61.13).

The word denoting "dogmeat" is *śvamāṁsa*, and an alternate reading given in the critical apparatus is "*svamāṁsa*," the eating of "one's own flesh," something which here seems to make more sense in terms of the metaphor that Viśvāmitra's sons are trying to convey—that sacrificing one's sons is like eating one's own flesh. However, this reading is unsupported by the commentators, who unanimously have read "*śvamāṁsa*," which allows for the linguistic play of the curse, since Viśvāmitra then curses his sons to "dwell on the earth as eaters of dogmeat, equal to the sons of Vasiṣṭha in *jāti*, for a full thousand years" (*Rām* 1.61.16).[120] Rather than determining which reading is correct, *svamāṁsa* or

[119] These hymns are to Indra and Viṣṇu, "*indram indrānujaṁ caiva*" (*Rām* 1.61.24), and not to Varuṇa, indicating a further religious transformation in which it is Indra, who had originally stolen the sacrifice, who rescues the boy and who bestows rewards onto the king. White suggests that the Brahmanic Vedic god has been replaced by the "Kṣatriya" god Indra (White 1991).

[120] Śivasahāya, in particular, dwells greatly on this issue. While Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa simply states that "the example of dogmeat is given on account of its providing support through worldly and śāstraic means," (*Rām GPP* 1.61.13), Śivasahāya elucidates these two arguments. The *laukika* or worldly explanation is that it is impractical: "Just as during the eating of the *agnihotra* offerings, the *pāyasa* and so forth, if a piece of dogmeat has fallen into them, it completely ends the act of eating, in the same way when it is time to protect one's own sons, whom one ought to protect, this protection of another's son completely impedes the necessary task of protecting one's own sons" (*Rām GPP* 1.61.13). The śāstraic explanation is that it is illegal: "It is prohibited to eat dog meat; that is, it ought not to be done by *vaidikas* [Vedic Brahmans]. In the same way, when you ought to be protecting your own sons, you should not on the contrary protect the son of another" (*Rām GPP* 1.61.13).

śvamāṁsa, the curse becomes much more meaningful if we consider them as juxtapositions of two different systems of social organization. The sons' usage of *svamāṁsa*, "one's own flesh," acts as a domestic argument, in which Viśvāmitra's action is perceived as a violation of interiority, while *śvamāṁsa*, "dog meat," invokes a śāstraic model of social hierarchy. The irresovability of the utterance, in this case, represents a mapping of *varṇa* discourse (*śvamāṁsa*) onto one of domesticity (*svamāṁsa*).

Through these two transformations, the *Rāmāyaṇa* tells a Viśvāmitra-centered version of the Śunaḥśepa legend. Continuing its *rasa* homology between Rāma's impossible quest and Viśvāmitra's unprecedented challenges to *varṇa*, the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Śvapaca curse presents *tapas* as a power-potential enabling the crossing of uncrossable boundaries. However, in doing so, it is necessary for the *Bālakāṇḍa* to refocalize the telling, and transform the Vedic legend radically enough to raise the doubts of medieval commentators, contemporary scholarship, and I suggest, other epic and purāṇic texts.[121]

Śunahśepa in the *purāṇas* (*BrahmaP* 104, 150; *BhāgavataP* 9.7, 9.16; *ViṣṇuP* 4.7.37, *BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.64-68, *VāyuP* 91.92-96, *BrahmaP* 10.54.63-66, *Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, no. 6B, 90-120)

The Śunaḥśepa legend appears ten times in seven *purāṇas*, with the majority being *gotra*-centered allusions resembling the *Mahābhārata's* account (*ViṣṇuP* 4.7.37, *BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.64-68, *VāyuP* 91.92-96, *BrahmaP* 10.54.63-66, *Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, no. 6B, 90-120). Attached at the end of the Satyavatī legend, these versions are

[121] Govindaraja responds to the objection that "this story [*kathā*] contradicts the history [*itihāsa*] given in the *Bahvṛca Brāhmaṇa*" by claiming that "Hariścandra is in fact another appellation [*sañjñānantaram*] of Ambarīṣa" (*Rām GPP* 1.61.26).

practically identical in wording, and clearly have a common source.[122] They are unanimous in three details: first, they all assert that Viśvāmitra adopted Śunaḥśepa, renamed Devarāta, during Hariścandra's sacrifice;[123] second, they declare that Śunaḥśepa was Ṛcīka's son and a Bhārgava; third, they leave unmentioned that Viśvāmitra cursed his sons, either before or after the sacrificial event.[124] Hariyappa considers these purāṇic tellings to belong to a "popular version" deriving from the *Rāmāyaṇa* telling, as opposed to the "orthodox version" of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (Hariyappa 1953, 224).[125] Building on Roth's much earlier hypotheses, Hariyappa suggests that the focus of these popular versions is "no longer the deliverance from immolation but the incorporation of Śunahśśepa [*sic*], or (with a change of persons) of Ṛcīka, into the family of the Kuśikas.

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[122] The precise references are as follows: "Viśvāmitra's son was the Bhārgava Śunaḥśepa, who was given to him by the gods and so called 'Devarāta'" (*ViṣṇuP* 4.7.37). "The sage Śunaḥśepa became Viśvāmitra's son, used as a victim in Hariścandra's sacrifice. Since Śunaḥśepa was given to Viśvāmitra by the gods, he came to be called 'Devarāta'. Śunaḥśepa is remembered as the eldest of Viśvāmitra's sons—Madhucchandas, etc., Kṛta, Deva, Dhruva, and Aṣṭaka" (*BrahmāṇḍaP* 2.3.66.64-68). "But the sage Śunaḥśepa became Viśvāmitra's son, used as a sacrificial victim in Hariścandra's sacrifice. Afterwards, he was given to Viśvāmitra by the gods. Since he was given by the gods, he became 'Devarāta.' And Śunaḥśepa is so remembered to be the eldest son of Viśvāmitra" (*VāyuP* 91.92-97). "Great sages, there is a well-known relationship between Brahmans and Kṣatriyas in the Paurava *brahmarṣi* Kauśika's lineage. Śunaḥśepa is regarded as the eldest of Viśvāmitra's sons. He was a great Bhārgava sage, who attained Kauśikahood. Śunaḥśepa in fact became Viśvāmitra's son when he was employed as a victim during Haridaśva's sacrifice. Śunaḥśepa was given back to Viśvāmitra by the gods; given by the gods, he became 'Devarāta'" (*BrahmaP* 10.63-66). "Śunaḥśepa is regarded as the foremost of Viśvāmitra's sons; the excellent sage was a Bhārgava who became a Kauśika. Śunaḥśepa in fact became Viśvāmitra's son during the sacrifice of Hariścandra, where he was used as a victim. Śunaḥśepa was then granted to Viśvāmitra by the gods, and since he was give to him by the gods, he then became Devarāta" (*Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1, no. 6B, 115-120). One manuscript of the latter (labeled "K_4" by the editors), further adds: "He who was sold to be a human sacrificial victim in Hariścandra's sacrifice, but who, praising the gods, the kings, and so on, was freed from his sacrificial binds, the ascetic who was granted to the Gādhis in the sacrifice to the gods, and so is called Devarāta, the Bhārgava Śunaḥśepa" (*Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1 no. 6B, 6**).

[123] Note that the *Brahma Purāṇa* calls the king "Haridaśva" (*BrahmaP* 10.65).

[124] The sole exception to the final detail is the K_4 manuscript of the *Harivaṁśa*, relegated to the apparatus of the critical edition, in which the sage curses his fifty sons elder to Madhuchandas to become "*mlecchas*," since they refuse to acknowledge Śunaḥśepa's superiority (*Harivaṁśa Pariśiṣṭa* 1 no. 6B, 7**).

[125] Hariyappa's delineation of folk and orthodox versions is problematic: none of these "popular" versions gives "Ambarīṣa" as the sacrificer, nor do they mention the Śvapaca curse, essential to the *Rāmāyaṇa's* telling. Hariyappa suggests that the puraṇic sources "owe to a common source, may be in this case *Mahābhārata*" (Hariyappa 1953, 215), but here we must note that the *Mahābhārata* does in fact mention the Śvapaca curse (*Mbh* 13.3.8).

It thus becomes in the end a family legend of the race of Viśvāmitra" (Hariyappa 1953, 226, discussing Roth 1846). As a Bhārgava transplant in the Kauśika family, Śunaḥśepa creates a relationship of power between these two *gotras*—as the *Brahma Purāṇa* points out, Śunaḥśepa "was a great Bhargava sage, who attained Kauśikahood" (*BrahmaP* 10.65). Through the adoption, the *gotra*-centered purāṇic versions serve to reinforce the Bhārgava roots of the Kauśikas' Brahmanhood.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* tells the Śunaḥśepa story twice (*BhāgP* 9.7 and 9.16). Like the other *gotra*-centered purāṇic versions, the latter is attached to the end of the Satyavatī legend in order to explain how the *pravaras* within the Kauśika *gotra* were formed (*BhāgP* 9.16.36). However, it is longer, incorporates a number of changes, and indeed seems to be actively comparing the purāṇic and Vedic versions. "It is fair to say," asserts Hariyappa, "that the author of the *Purāṇa* has rewritten the *AB* in the form of verse, with the ancient text actually before him" (Hariyappa 1953, 215). It includes both the adoption motif and the Śvapaca-curse, and, ineterestingly, it declares that Śunaḥśepa is the son of Ajīgarta as well as a Bhārgava (*BhāgP* 9.16.29).[126]

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* Satyavatī legend that this version of Śunaḥśepa supplements is entitled "Paraśurāmopākhyāna" but takes a Viśvāmitra-centered perspective on the legend. As such, it is complementary with the other version of Śunaḥśepa at *BhāgP* 9.7, entitled "Hariścandropākhyāna" and found in the genealogy of the Ikṣvāku dynasty. This version tells of Hariścandra's propitiation of Varuṇa (*BhāgP* 9.7.8-9) and his delay in sacrificing his son (*BhāgP* 9.7.10-15), then Rohita's running away (*BhāgP* 9.7.16) and Indra's repeatedly preventing his homecoming (*BhāgP* 9.7.17-

[126] Vedic genealogies place Ajīgarta in the *gotra* of Aṅgiras.

19). We then have Rohita's purchase of Śunaḥśepa from Ajīgarta (*BhāgP* 9.7.20-21) and the subsequent human sacrifice, in which, like the Vedic versions, "Viśvāmitra was the *hotṛ*, and the *adhvaryu* was the wise Jamadagni; the *brāhmaṇa* was Vasiṣṭha, the *sāma* singer was Ayāsya" (*BhāgP* 9.7.22). The result of the sacrifice is a golden chariot from Indra to the king (*BhāgP* 9.7.23), and praise for Śunaḥśepa, to whom a gratified Viśvāmitra "granted an unimpeded pathway of knowledge" (*BhāgP* 9.7.24).[127] This telling does not mention the adoption aftermath or the Śvapaca-curse.

Hariyappa notes that the *Bhāgavata's* two tellings are not separate versions, but rather one split version, closely based on the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. I suggest that the split itself betrays this *purāṇa's* narrative strategy—it is not interested in synthesizing the vedic narrative version (*BhāgP* 9.7) with the purāṇic genealogical version (*BhāgP* 9.16), which the *Devībhāgavata* will do, but in keeping them apart within their distinct contexts: Brahman and Kṣatriya genealogies.

The oldest of the four narrative-based tellings is found in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, where the legend is told as a part of the *Gautamī-māhātmya*. It is at the Gautamī's *tīrthas* that most of the significant events of the story take place. Varuṇa is propitiated here (*BrahmaP* 104.16-19), Rohita purchases Śunaḥśepa here from Ajīgarta (*BrahmaP* 104.41-45), and, though it is aborted, it is where the sacrifice itself transpires (*BrahmaP* 104.70-77). Through these storywold changes, this *purāṇa* repositions its discursive

[127] It is an Upaniṣādic pathway of knowledge that allows Śunaḥśepa the "indescribable and unfathomable" bliss of *nirvāṇa* (*BhāgP* 9.7.25cd-26): "The wind is held within the earth, which is held in the waters, the power of fire holds the waters, and the wind in the sky holds it, and that is located in the supreme spirit, the *ahaṁkāra*" (*BhāgP* 9.7.25ab). Note the association here of Viśvāmitra with *ahaṁkāra*— here meaning 'inner Self' or 'soul.' In modern, popular representations, Viśvāmitra is also associated with *ahaṁkāra*, but in the sense of 'pride' or 'self-aggrandisement'—consider for example Balasaheb Panta Pratinidhi's *kīrtan* on the *kāmadhenu* legend entitled *Ahaṁkār* (Panta Pratinidhi 1929).

interest from Vedic *mantra* to geographical *tīrtha*, seeking to correlate normative sources of power (*mantra* and ritual) with a newly emergent form of religiosity.

The *Brahma Purāṇa's* discursive move from *mantra* to *tīrtha* goes hand-in-hand with a devotional rejection of the notion of sacrifice that is observable in two intriguing monologues. First, hearing that he is to be sacrificed to Varuṇa, Rohita has a rather emotional outburst:

> "What is the meaning of this?" said Rohita to his father, and his father explained to him in detail everything that had happened…Rohita then said, "Before this happens, great King, if you should allow it, let me just take with me sacrificial priests and our *purohita*, and go sacrifice Varuṇa himself as a victim for Viṣṇu the world-protector!" (*BrahmaP* 104.37-38)

This daring blasphemy, unique to this purāṇa, has received little scholarly attention, though it is precisely what brings about Varuṇa's curse. Hariyappa remarks that "the sarcasm behind '*paśunā*' ['as a sacrifice'] is irresistible!" (Hariyappa 1953, 213, note 101), but the statement hardly seems sarcastic, and instead voices a real sense of protest against Vedic sacrificial practice. Furthermore, Hariścandra is not seen as a king trying unscrupulously to get out of his sacrificial obligations; instead this text details Rohita's struggle to resist a brutal manifestation of normativity: Vedic sacrifice gone horribly wrong.

This active voice of resistance is complemented by a second, more significant moment of ideological resistance. Unique to the *Brahma Purāṇa*, Hariścandra refuses to sacrifice Śunaḥśepa, since he is a Brahman, and accepts the likelihood of his own death:

> *Śruti* tells us that the king should protect Brahmans, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, and specifically that the Brahmans are the most esteemed of *varṇas*. If they are to be revered even by Viṣṇu, what about someone like me? If a king should disrespect them, it means the destruction of his own family. Brahmans are made of all the *tīrthas*, they are made of all the gods. They are the saviors of all men that are

> fallen into hell. How could I protect them, if I turn them into sacrificial victims? It is therefore inappropriate for me to make a Brahman a victim. It is better that I should die—for a Brahman should never become a victim. So, son, that is what I will do, and you go off happily with that Brahman. (*BrahmaP* 104.62-65)

Through Hariścandra's speech, the *Brahma Purāṇa* accomplishes two ideological linkages: first, it links *śruti* (Vedic discourse) to Brahman-centered, hierarchical *varṇa* structure; second, it links *varṇa* to the purāṇic construct of the *tīrtha*. The *Brahma Purāṇa's* telling, through its new, purāṇic discourse of *tīrtha*, sidesteps the counter-normative scenario of a Kṣatriya sacrificing a Brahman—something with which the text, as well as its presumed audience, is clearly uncomfortable (Hariyappa 1953, 223).

This religious discomfort results in a narrative impasse, since the presupposed story has to end in sacrifice. The problem is solved by the interjection of a "disembodied voice [*aśarīra-vāk*]," which instructs Hariścandra to carry out the sacrifice at the banks of the Gautamī anyway, assuring him that "it will take place without the murder of Śunaḥśepa" (*BrahmaP* 104.67-68). When he does so, it is through Viśvāmitra's compassionate intervention that the matter is resolved by ritual bathing (*snāna*) instead of human sacrifice.[128] Hariyappa has argued that the *Brahma Purāṇa's* deviation from the Vedic tellings "is natural to an age which looked upon sacrifices, particularly the human sacrifice, with horror. The sacrificial age had been substituted by an age which believed in washing off all sins in the holy waters of the Ganges" (Hariyappa 1953, 214). Rather than a "natural" reflection, I suggest that the *Brahma Purāṇa's* telling is actively working to bring about this religious change from sacrifice to *snāna*, particularly through

[128] During the sacrifice, Viśvāmitra intervenes, objecting to Śunaḥśepa being "offered into the fire as a sacrifice, with his clothes, his hair, his skin, his flesh" (*BrahmaP* 104.75). Instead, he successfully lobbies that those in attendance ought to bathe at the *tīrthas* of the Gautamī, including Śunaḥśepa himself. They do, and ultimately the gods declare: "The sacrifice is complete, without the murder of Śunaḥśepa" (*BrahmaP* 104.80).

articulating Rohita's voice of protest and Hariścandra's self-sacrificing refusal to sacrifice the Brahman.

This ideological negotiation is supplemented with another legend that appears in detached form within the *Brahma Purāṇa* (*BrahmaP* 150), telling of the latter days of Śunaḥśepa's father, here called Jīgarti, and who, due to his crimes, succumbs to illness, dies, undergoes severe trials in hell, and eventually becomes a *piśāca*, until he is rescued by his son and through the power of a *tīrtha*.[129] Though often dismissed as a "novelty" (Hariyappa 1953, 214), this narrative is an attempt to come to terms with the criminalization of the Brahman Jīgarti in a way that continues to valorize *tīrtha*-bathing and devotional religious practices as salvific activities.

IV. Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa in the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa (DBhP 7. 17-28; 6.12-13, 7.14-17)

The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* juxtaposes the Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa narratives on two separate occasions. The first instance, discussed above, comes during a discussion of the efficacy of *tīrthas*, *tapas*, and ritual, and presents a short version of Śunaḥśepa and an partial telling of Hariścandra woven into the *āḍi-baka* story (*DBhP* 6.12-13). The second instance comes in the *Devībhāgavata's* elaborate genealogy of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, told immediately after its intricate version of the Satyavrata/Triśaṅku legend (*DBhP* 7.14-17 and 7.17-28). Due to textual evidence, it appears that the *skandha* 6

[129] Śunaḥśepa runs into him on the side of a road, learns of what has happened, and nobly declares, "It was my fault that you sold me and ended up in hell—and so I will now take you up to heaven" (*BrahmaP* 150.15). Bathing at a *tīrtha* along the Gautamī, he indeed does so, and Jīgarti is transported into "Viṣṇu's realm, through the power of his son, the power of the Gaṅgā, as well as Hari and Śambhu" (*BrahmaP* 150.20).

version is indeed an abridgement of the *skandha* 7 version,[130] and this internal intertextuality is crucial to understand why exactly it is that the *Devībhāgavata* tells the Śunaḥśepa legend before the Hariścandra story, which as we have seen, has become widely popular in folk and classical forms by this time. In investigating this purāṇa's textual performance, we arrive at the central argument of this chapter, that Hariścandra and Viśvāmitra are purāṇic characters who, beginning in the medieval period, come to represent, two different types of power in conflict: the nobility of *bhakti* (Hariścandra) and the excesses of Brahmanhood (Viśvāmitra).

The Hariścandra legend that the *Devībhāgavata* presents here is almost certainly a conscious retelling of the version found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and it does not radically depart from the basic structure of the legend. However, this text introduces several plot differences that betray its allegiance to folk versions: an initial wager between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, with the sage's *tapas* matched against the king's *satya* (*DBhP* 7.17.56-58), the motif of the boar-hunt, a detailed description of Hariścandra's wife's suffering as the Brahman's domestic servant, and the climax as Hariścandra is forced to kill his own wife. It is through juxtaposing the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* telling with these folk motifs that this *purāṇa* constructs a discursive space in which a non-Brahman critique of normative Brahmanic ideology is legitimately raised, and in which it is all but impossible for the audience not to hold the Brahman Viśvāmitra accountable for the Kṣatriya Hariścandra's suffering.

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[130] The earlier telling lacks three crucial elements of plot: it abbreviates the sale of Śunaḥśepa (saying only that Hariścandra's minister "took away the middle son Śunaḥśepa" *DBhP* 6.13.16), it does not mention Ajīgarta volunteering to execute his son for an additional fee (a motif found only in the Vedic tellings and in the second *Devībhāgavata* telling), and presents no adoption debate or Śvapaca curse (with only a mention that "Viśvāmitra made him his son, freeing him from death" *DBhP* 6.13.29).

After the folk motif of the wager between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha in heaven, the *Devībhāgavata* follows the *Mārkaṇḍeya* in describing how Hariścandra, out hunting in the forest (*DBhP* 7.18.1), comes to the aid of a woman being harassed by Viśvāmitra's *tapas*.[131] Hariścandra then makes a bold move to alleviate her suffering: he outlaws Viśvāmitra's *tapas*. "In my dominion," proclaims the king, "severe, highly painful *tapas* that produces torment for everyone else is not allowed to be done, by anyone, and for any reason" (*DBhP* 7.18.13). This striking condemnation reimagines this boundary-crossing force as society-threatening rather than self-empowering, and this threat becomes actualized as the *Devī bhāgavata* then includes the folk motif of the boar hunt.

Practically all the folk versionsinclude the boar-hunt motif, and it is clearly important to the *Devībhāgavata*. As Viśvāmitra releases a demon (*dānava*) in the form of a gigantic wild boar into Hariścandra's royal gardens to retaliate against his *tapas*-prohibition, the numerous domestic flowering plants and trees that the boar uproots are given great detail, as is the fright of the gardeners and attendants (*DBhP* 7.18.18-23), and the terror of the boar, as it nimbly dodges his arrows, charges and leaps over him, and scampers off into the wild woods (*DBhP* 7.18.32-38). Hariścandra gives chase and, separated from his troops, wanders alone into Viśvāmitra's *aśrama*, just as in the Marathi versions. In an inversion of the *kāmadhenu* legend, where the Kṣatriya enters Brahman space and forcibly wrests away his domestic cow, here we have a Brahman thrusting a hostile and patently non-domestic beast into the king's tranquil garden of domestic plants, and displacing the Kṣatriya into the wild forest, where he will give away his

[131] The *Devībhāgavata* is not specific about who precisely this woman is; in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* as well as the *Caṇḍakauśika*, there are three damsels in distress, who are embodiments of the three *vidyās* (knowledges) that the sage is trying to master through *tapas*.

kingdom. Following neither folk versions in which it happens in a dream, nor the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, in which it is a payment for the *rājasūya* (*MārkP* 7.25-30), the *Devībhāgavata* presents Hariścandra's giveaway as a combination of *tīrtha*-donation with an illusionary wedding present. First, Viśvāmitra urges Hariścandra to bathe at a sacred "salvation-bestowing" *tīrtha* (*DBhP* 7.19.2), and to make a donation (to him). Hariścandra does so and offers him a gift, though he realizes that the sage's words "were put together with deceit" (*DBhP* 7.19.7). Viśvāmitra then announces that his son's wedding is taking place that very day(*DBhP* 7.19.15). Producing a false bride and groom, the sage performs the marriage rites, and asks the king for his kingdom as a gift, followed by a request for a *dakṣiṇā*, since "Manu has said that a donation without a *dakṣiṇā* is fruitless" (*DBhP* 7.19.28). Taken together, Hariścandra's *tapas*-prohibition, the boar invasion, the critique of the *tīrtha's* efficacy, and the *māyā*-wedding constitute a serious critique of Brahman abuses of power: while other, earlier texts treat *tapas*, *tīrtha*, and ritual as having a counter-normative efficacy, enabling individuals like Viśvāmitra to cross boundaries, here we find a situation in which they threaten the stability of Kṣatriya domesticity.

After Hariścandra gives away his kingdom, the *Devībhāgavata* follows the plot of the *Mārkaṇḍeya* rather closely, though the Draupadeya curse is absent. His wife and son are sold to a Brahman, who is really Viśvāmitra in disguise (*DBhP* 7.22.7), and Hariścandra enters Caṇḍāla servitude. Then, uniquely, the *Devībhāgavata's* focalization shifts to Śaibyā and her suffering as a servant in the Brahman's home. In this telling's most striking innovation, when their son is fatally bitten by a Viśvāmitra-dispatched snake (*DBhP* 7.25.1-4), we witness the cold, self-centered cruelty of the Brahman master.

When Śaibyā swoons at hearing of her son's death (*DBhP* 7.25.1-4), the Brahman says: "Though you know better, you are crying inauspiciously and censurably at the beginning of night. Wicked woman, don't you have any shame [*lajjā*] in your heart" (*DBhP* 7.25.12-13)? He accuses her of defaulting on her duties, denies her request to go see her dead child, and condemns her insubordination: "Deceitful woman, don't you realize the sin involved in wicked conduct? A person who takes his master's money but cheats on doing his work cooks in hell" (*DBhP* 7.25.20-21).

Only after she has finished all of her daily chores until late into the night (*DBhP* 7.25.28), does the Brahman allows her to go attend to her son's funeral, warning her to return quickly, "So that you may not skip out on the early morning housework" (*DBhP* 7.25.29-30). Caricatured as a superstitious, uncaring, and *śāstra*-wielding taskmaster, the Brahman's representation goes hand-in-hand with this *purāṇas* questioning of *tapas*, *tīrtha*, and ritual, and in distinct contrast to the folk versions. It is a construction, I believe, of Brahmanhood gone wrong, and it is no mistake that the purāṇic versions insist that this Brahman is indeed Viśvāmitra in disguise. By generating sympathy for Śaibyā's plight, this *purāṇa* constructs a discursive space in which a certain type of Brahmanhood is questioned, through the social category of "villainous Brahman."

The final folk motif found in the *Devībhāgavata's* telling is the climax, as Śaibyā goes to cremate her dead son. While the folk versions involve elaborate efforts on the part of Viśvāmitra to terrorize poor Tārāmatī, the *Mārkaṇḍeya* only described the mutual recognition of king and wife, their lament, and their decision to forsake *dharma* and enter into their son's funeral pyre. In the *Devībhāgavata*, these two scenes are combined. Following folk versions, Śaibyā is mistaken for a demoness as she laments over her dead

son's body (*DBhP* 7.25.61). The Cāṇḍāla instructs Hariścandra to execute her (*DBhP* 7.25.68-69). Then, like the purāṇic version, he recognizes her as his wife, and the dead boy as his son, and they both resolve to enter into their son's funeral pyre. They are saved at the last moment through divine intervention, theson is revived, and Hariścandra, along with all of Ayodhyā, is offered a space in heaven.

As is expected in the *Devībhāgavata*, this intervention is not due to Viṣṇu, but due to the power of the Goddess, for as Hariścandra was entering into the pyre,

> He meditated on that highest Lady, the hundred-eyed Goddess of the world, who exists within all five *kośas*, who has the nature of *brahman*, who is its tail-end, who wears red, who is an ocean of the *karuṇā rasa*, Ambā, who wields many different types of weapons, who is devoted to taking care of the world. (*DBhP* 7.27.2-3)

Through this assertion, we can see why the *Devībhāgavata* synthesizes folk and classical versions—it is interested in narrativizing its Goddess-centered discourse, in giving it a tangible base. Through infusing motifs from the Vaiśṇava folk versions, the *Devībhāgavata* gives voice to an alternate, *bhakti*-centered discourse that uses the folktale to question normative sources of religious power, problematizing its sources (misused *tapas*, *tīrtha*, ritual, and *śāstra*) and emphasizing the notion of *satya* as a means to cope with suffering. This *satya* is then tied explicitly to Goddess-devotion, instead of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, and this newer religious tradition is given purāṇic authority through the narrative's allegiance to the *Mārkaṇḍeya's* earlier telling. That is, since it is already a recognized purāṇic subnarrative, and not a new creation—an "old bottle," perhaps—the old Hariścandra story provides a space in which this new religiosity enters into dialogue with older discourses.

The question put to these discourses is about Viśvāmitra: Why was Viśvāmitra so cruel to Hariścandra? Even though the story is well-known on account of Hariścandra's *satya*, the question that lingers, surprisingly, is not about *bhakti* but about *varṇa* and *dharma*: That is, why did a Brahman exploit the normative rules of *śāstra* to inflict suffering onto a righteous and noble Kṣatriya? And what did he do about it? If we look at the *Devībhāgavata's* Satyavrata, Triśaṅku, Śvapaca, Śunaḥśepa, and Hariścandra legends together as a connected narrative, it appears to be constructed to answer these questions about Viśvāmitra (and more generally about Brahmans and Kings) with a Kṣatriya-centered narrative and through a discourse of Goddess-devotion. The Śunaḥśepa legend is placed immediately before the Hariścandra, in a causal relationship explaining the king's harassment to be a consequence of his tricking Varuṇa (*DBhP* 7.17.55). In other words, the *Devībhāgavata* is attempting to chronologize these two complementary legends, as it had earlier the Satyavrata and Triśaṅku narratives (see Chapter Four).

It is not easy to do this. At the conclusion of the Śunaḥśepa legend, Rohita is at least thirteen years of age, since at least two years have passed since his *upanayana* at age eleven (*DBhP* 7.15.46)—and more likely, he is at least seventeen or eighteen. In the Hariścandra legend, however, the boy, now called Rohitākhya, is preadolescent child.[132] The *Devībhāgavata* attempts to resolve this chronological issue at the conclusion of the Śunaḥśepa story, as Rohita, now called Rohitākhya, returns home after hearing about the resolution of the Śunaḥśepa sacrifice:

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[132] In a melodramatic scene in which both Hariścandra and his wife have fainted (*DBhP* 7.20.39-43), Rohitākhya sits crying in between them: "Daddy, Daddy! Give me food! Mommy! Give me something to eat! I am really hungry and the tip of my tongue is very parched" (*DBhP* 7.20.45). When his mother is sold to the Brahman, he again is represented as a young child, crying after his departing mother, and pulling at her clothes (*DBhP* 7.22.18-20). This is hardly the behavior one would expect from an Ikṣvāku teenager!

Rohitākhya, hearing of the events involving Varuṇa, gladly returned home from the difficult traverses of the mountain forests. Full of joy, the king of Kosala came quickly to see his face. Seeing his father, spinning with love, [Rohitākhya] was at a loss for words, and, like a stick of wood, he fell to the ground, his face full of tears of grief. The King, picking him up, joyously embraced him. Kissing him on the forehead, he asked him how he was. Taking him into his lap, the King became happy, and, sprinkling him with the warm water falling from his eyes, he anointed him. Thus, along with his beloved son, he ruled the kingdom. (*DBhP* 7.17.39-44)

This passage begins with a teenaged Rohita and ends with a young boy, and perhaps this is the point, since his adolescent running away from home is essential to the Śunaḥśepa legend, and the father's love for his pre-adolescent boy is essential to the tragedy of the Hariścandra legend—the *purāṇa* finds a way to link them together.

This chronological relationship is also accompanied by a discursive one—we have seen that the Śunaḥśepa legend constructs a compassionate Viśvāmitra who provides Śunaḥśepa with the vedic *mantra* for Varuṇa (*DBhP* 7.17.1-4). He also intervenes in the sacrifice, giving Hariścandra a significant and lengthy lecture on the evils of violence,[133] the perils of Brahman-murder,[134] of the onus of guilt that would fall on the king if Ajīgarta were to murder his own son,[135] and the debt he owes Viśvāmitra for helping his father get to heaven.[136] It is the sage's anger at being rebuked by Hariścandra that spills

[133] "Your ritual shall be completed, and your illness will be shaken, be assured; there is no virtue like mercy and there is no evil like violence. Think about what they have urged: to behave pleasantly towards those you love. Protecting one's own body while cutting down the bodies of others ought never be done, King, by someone who desires good things. With mercy towards all creatures, an individual is satisfied with anything. By pacifying the senses, a King becomes fully gratified. You should think of all other creatures as you do of yourself, great King" (*DBhP* 7.16.38-42).

[134] "Living is indeed the most precious thing for everyone at all times, and you wish to make your body happy by killing a Brahman. How can someone not want to protect his body, the site of his own happiness? Are you sure that you have no enmity with him from a previous birth? For you wish to kill this Brahman's son, who is otherwise innocent. Someone who is killed by someone else without enmity, entirely out of his own fancy, he then kills his killer, when he is reborn in the next life" (*DBhP* 7.16.43-46).

[135] "His father, who has indulged you, is incredibly wicked, since he would vilely commit crimes against his own son out of greed for money...If someone behaves sinfully in his country, the king must bear a sixth of his sins, there is no doubt. And therefore this person who has set about to commit an act of evil, the king must stop him. Why didn't you prevent him from selling his son" (*DBhP* 7.16.46-50)?

[136] "You are the auspicious son of Triśaṅku, born in the Solar dynasty. You are a nobleman, King, but you wish to commit this ignoble act. By releasing the sage's son, and by heeding my words, happiness will return to your body, King. Because of his carelessness, your father had been cursed to become a Caṇḍala,

over into the subsequent legend. At the same time,Viśvāmitra's speech acts as a textual performance, an attempt to recast the violent and cruel villain as a compassionate, wise, and sober Brahman.

The ascription of Viśvāmitra's hostilities to the Kṣatriya (Hariścandra) as a direct result of his compassion to the Brahman (Śunaḥśepa) reveals the purāṇa's discursive motives. It is a text that is trying, in the eleventh or twelfth century, to establish *devī-bhakti* as a legitimate and understandable form of religious power for Brahmans, and it has assembled mythic, legendary, historical, vedic and śāstraic evidence to support the cause. In doing so, it has constructed a storyworld populated by a consistent set of narrative characters—Triśaṅku, Hariścandra, Vasiṣṭha, and Viśvāmitra. While the former are human kings, deriving their power from goddess worship and *satya*, the latter are superhuman sages, whose power comes from Vedic *mantras*, rituals, *tīrthas*, and *tapas*. Though in places it valorizes these sources of sacred power, this *purāṇa* also problematizes them, declaring that "neither the Vedas, the *śāstras*, *vratas*, *tapas*, sacrifices or charity can purify the heart" (*DBhP* 6.12.28). This is the domain of *bhakti*. The key to understanding the textual performance of *purāṇas*, I believe, is to recognize that though they claim to be addressing a wider population, in reality their direct readers were Brahmans. Thus, in order to present the religious discourse of *bhakti* as a legitimate system for Brahmans, the *Devībhāgavata* 'performs' the Śunaḥśepa and Hariścandra legends to create a homology of immersion in which, along with its largely Brahman audience, the new discourse of *bhakti* is immersed into the storyworld.

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but I caused him in fact to reach heaven in his own body. Thus, out of appreciation, heed my words. Release this child who is suffering and crying in fright" (*DBhP* 7.16.50-54).

V. Conclusions: Synthesizing Śunaḥśepa and Hariścandra in nāradīya kīrtan

Three points have emerged from our study of the Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa legends. First, the narrative conflict between heroic Hariścandra and villainous Viśvāmitra produces a discursive opposition between *dharma* and *bhakti*, granting the Hariścandra legend an important place in devotional performance traditions. It is told and retold because it offers a dramatization of the power of *bhakti* to overcome great human suffering in the wake of a total collapse of *dharma* and abuse of *varṇa*. Second, the Śunaḥśepa legend, functionally equivalent to Hariścandra, constructs an opposition between *dharma* and *mantra* through a narrative conflict between heroic Viśvāmitra and villainous Hariścandra, and offers a similar dramatization of the power of the Vedic *mantra* to overcome dharmic collapse. Third, we have noticed that it is surprisingly rare that both legends are told together, and the only purāṇic text that synthesizes both legends, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* juggles between Vedic, śāstraic, and *bhakti*-centered discourses as the composer tries to rectify the discrepancies between the two stories.

Like the Satyavrata and Triśaṅku legends of the previous chapter, I suggest that this complementarity is achieved through textual performance. That is, the composer of the *Devībhāgavata* has made an attempt to reconcile these two religious modes of thought. In concluding this chapter, we return to Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s *kīrtans* to examine how this aspect of performance involves a homology of immersion. When Kolhatkar fused these two legends together in his lengthy, eight-day culmination of the Viśvāmitra *kīrtans*, his textual inspiration was the *Devībhāgavata*, as he himself suggested several times in his *kīrtans*. However, he did not blindly retell the purāṇic text, but traced the two legends to what he felt were their "original" sources—the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* for

Śunaḥśepa and folklore for the Hariścandra legend. Kolhatkar-*buwā*, like many epic and purāṇic composers, subordinated the folk legend in favor of the Vedic, but he did not eliminate it altogether. Instead, he used the Hariścandra story as a springboard from which he propelled his folk audience, which was overwhelmingly interested in *bhakti*, into the Śunaḥśepa storyworld, forcing them to think in Vedic and śāstraic terms.

As we have discussed before, at the innermost regions of Kolhatkar-*buwā*'s vision of Brahman identity lie the Vedas. For him, Brahmanhood means following śāstraic behavioral and social obligations in order to create pure spaces (minds, bodies, homes) in which the Vedas can be safely housed, and these activities consume his day-to-day domestic life. At the same time, much of the Narad Mandir audience, it is safe to say, knows practically nothing about the Vedas, though they all hold them in high regard while continuing to study Marathi *sant* literature and to follow the behavioral obligations of the *bhakti* tradition. Kolhatkar-*buwā's* greatest motivation in his *kīrtans* and his daily *pravacans* is the proper exposition of this Vedic/śāstraic nucleus of traditional Brahmanhood. Kolhatkar desires to "elevate" the thoughts of his audience from just repeating the name of God to thinking about topics like *ṛta* and *satya* (Chapter Two), the *kośa* theory (Chapter Three), and purāṇic history (Chapter Four).

In his Śunaḥśepa *pūrvaraṅgas*, among a myriad of śāstraic topics, Kolhatkar-*buwā* gave a long lecture on what precisely the Vedas are, and what role they are to play in today's religious culture. He began with an analysis of the term *brahmarṣi*, declaring first that "*brahman* means Veda" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 11, 2000). He then explained the textual nature of the Vedic *śākhās* (branches)– the four *Saṁhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, and the *Āraṇyakas*. He then explained the three *prakṛti* (natural) and eight

vikṛti (derivative) modes of Vedic recitation, and then explained how the *Sāma Veda* does not have these modes, but is sung. Finally, he discussed the presence in the Vedas of three types of knowledge: thisworldly (*aihika*), otherworldly (*paralaukika*) and transcendental (*pāramarthika*), explaining: "This is our faith from the most ancient of times" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 11, 2000). After these preliminaries, he presented an interesting discussion of how the Veda can help one build an automobile:

> If I want to make a car, how would I make it? The issue begins with whether or not even to build one. Do you have to make a car? If you have to make one, then can you make one that does not pollute the air? That is, if we take up these sorts of issues, then its *guṇa sūtras* [aphorisms of characteristics] are found in the Vedas. The Vedas don't contain its *formulas—like "Make this *piston and make this kind of *crankshaft"—that is not there, you see. But there are directives, which appear there in various forms. They are in the form of deities. Whatever particular deity you proipitiate, that particular deity gives such and such kind of result. This is one particular worldview [*dṛṣṭi*] of the Veda. (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 11, 2000)

In a later *kīrtan*, he gave his audience a picture of how these texts survive today, telling them about his son Samihan, who had performed two days of *kīrtan* at Narad Mandir while his father had lost his voice due to bronchitis.[137] Explaining that he had just recently become a *ghanapāṭhī*, Kolhatkar explained that he was the only person his age to gain this title in Maharashtra, and that "in all of India, there are no more than six or seven" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 13, 2000), bemoaning the fact that there is a gap of at least twenty years between Samihan and the next *ghanapāṭhī*.

The picture of the Veda that emerges from Kolhatkar's *kīrtans* is threefold. First, the Veda represents the most interiorized and sacred form of knowledge; second, this

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[137] Samihan, twenty-six years of age at the time, was not exactly comfortable on the *kīrtan* stage, and though his *kīrtans* were not well received by the audience, he offered a remarkably well-read and complex reading of the term *ṛṣi*, dwelling on how "a person can attain *ṛṣi*-hood through various different means"—*tapas*, study, or a *ṛṣi*-birth (Samihan Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 12, 2000).

knowledge is universal in its applicability; third, it is a difficult and austere path. But what is its relevance to the audience of Narad Mandir? How do the Vedas (and the *śāstras*) apply to the religious needs of the everyday Puneri? Kolhatkar answered this question by telling the Śunaḥśepa *ākhyān*. In practically every day of his Śunaḥśepa *kīrtans*, he emphasized that it is a Vedic legend, and that he is telling it in a "Prakrit" form (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 11, 2000), emphasizing the act of translation. However, on another occasion, he explained:

> I'm not telling it in the manner [*paddhatī*] of the Vedas right now, but in the manner of the *purāṇas*. In the Vedic manner, it has the support of Sanskrit—only then can you tell it in the Vedic manner. He who has the taste for Sanskrit, he can tell it in the Vedic manner. Here, the taste of the *purāṇas* is different, and so we are telling it in this manner. The Vedas are all in Sanskrit. Some people ask me, "Oh, are they all in Sanskrit?" No, no, no! They're in *moḍī* script! And sometimes they're in Hindi and sometimes they're in Marathi! [Laughter.] (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 13, 2000)

Kolhatkar-*buwā* constructs a literary opposition based on language: the Sanskrit Veda versus the "Prakrit" *purāṇas*, just as he had previously done with the Sanskrit *purāṇas* and the Marathi *sant* literature (Chapter Four). Through a long lament about *kīrtan* community's ignorance of Sanskrit texts,[138] and the disastrous effects of television on religious knowledge, including a stinging diatribe on Amitabh Bacchan as a false neo-*guru* as the host of "Kaun Banega Crorepati" (a hit gameshow modeled after "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?"),[139] Kolhatkar explained why the Vedas are Sanskrit, but the

[138] "You people who have listened to *kīrtan* for 20-20, 30-30 years in Narad Mandir, didn't it bring you any type of wisdom? The difference between the *Bhagavad-gitā* and the *Jñāneśvarī*—I was teaching *kīrtan* to youth here in the Spring course, and they don't even realize that the *Jñāneśvarī* is a Marathi translation of the *Bhagavad-gitā*" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 13, 2000).

[139] "In the world of criminals, the popular leader of the country of India, the highest person, he who is a great artist, he is the *guru* of our people, young as well as 70-70 year olds…That criminal doesn't know anything of course, he is just reading it from somewhere…He must not become our *guru*, how could he? He is an actor. An actor cannot become a *guru* in the context of *kīrtan*—he has no authority in this. If you tell

purāṇas are not. While both sorts of texts are composed in the language called "Sanskrit," the Vedas cannot be translated out of this language. To explain a Vedic narrative, such as the Śunaḥśepa legend, the *kīrtankār* must thrust the audience into the Vedic storyworld.

Only through immersion can one grasp the relationship between *dharma* and *mantra*. "Because he didn't have a purity of *dharma*," explained Kolhatkar, "Hariścandra tricked Varuṇa, and now we are listening to the consequences" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 13, 2000). By making Hariścandra the object of dharmic debate, Kolhatkar-*buwā* used the complementarity of the vedic and folk legends to preach to the audience to immerse their *bhakti* into the structures of Vedic and śāstraic *dharma*. Rather than translating the Śunaḥśepa narrative into the language of *bhakti*, he subordinated the clearly *bhakti* strains of the Hariścandra story, warning us not to be fooled into feeling pity for wicked Hariścandra. This process of immersion, I argue, takes place in the *Devībhāgavata's* textual performance, but in the opposite direction.

The *Devībhāgavata* tells the Śunaḥśepa legend with practically no references to *bhakti*, and in the end, Śunaḥśepa is rescued by Viśvāmitra's gift of Vedic *mantras* (*DBhP* 7.17.1-5). The human sacrifice is averted through the power of Vedic *mantra*, and Śunaḥśepa's adoption involves a new "legal determination following from the Vedas and *śāstras*" (*DBhP* 7.17.21). It is a strategy familiar to the audience—the *Devībhāgavata* uses the boundary-crossing figure of Viśvāmitra to construct a 'new Veda' and a 'new *śāstra*,' just the same role he had played in the Triśaṅku/Satyavrata narratives. Then,

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him to do this, he'll fo this. If you tell him to do that, he'll do that" (Kolhatkar, *kīrtan*, December 13, 2000). [The doubled numbers in this and the previous note are reduplications that appear in Marathi parlance, indicating a generalized number.]

through synthesis, *Devībhāgavata* then plunges its audience into the storyworld of Hariścandra. Normative *dharma* fails for Hariścandra, and counter-normative Viśvāmitra is not helpful but in fact his enemy. Stripping away the Vedic and śāstraic discourse the audience knows, the narrative leaves its protagonists with only their *satya* to guide them to heaven; this *satya* is maintained precisely through *devī-bhakti* Thus, just as Kolhatkar-*buwā* today induces his audience think in Vedic and śāstraic ways in his performances, the purāṇic audience is made to take a 'leap of faith' into a new, unfamiliar religious discourse.

The Hariścandra and Śunaḥśepa legends are perhaps the most powerful and dramatic stories involving Viśvāmitra. While he is villainized in the former and valorized in the latter, in both he serves as both a symbol and agent of the counter-normative, challenging the *status quo* and pushing the limits of śāstraic behavior. As we turn to the concluding chapter, we will extrapolate the larger narratological and anthropological results of this study through a brief analysis of narratives in which efforts are made to counteract this sage's counter-normativity—the Menakā and Rambhā legends in which seduction becomes the last recourse to stop Viśvāmitra's 'will to Brahman power.'

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS: CAN ANYONE STOP VIŚVĀMITRA?

Viśvāmitra's story is still not quite over. In the *Rāmāyaṇa's* 'mini-epic,' after Śunaḥśepa's rescue the god Brahmā descends and addresses Viśvāmitra as simply "*ṛṣi*" (*Rām* 1.62.2); the *Rāmāyaṇa's* medieval commentators unanimously declare this to be a sign that the sage has shed his Kṣatriyahood through *tapas*. They note, however, that he has not yet attained Brahmanhood, and there is still a series of trials and tribulations for our hero to endure before becoming a *brahmarṣi*. The episodes still remaining in Śatānanda's telling are stories of seduction: the story of Menakā (*Rām* 1.62) and the Rambhā episode (*Rām* 1.63).[1] Finally, after the sage overcomes both lust and anger (*kāma* and *krodha*), and after his spiritual perfection begins to unravel cosmic structure—"The oceans have all become agitated, and the mountains are crumbling; the earth quakes and the wind blows wildly" (*Rām* 1.64.7)—Brahmā has no choice but to offer him the title of *brahmarṣi*, acknowledging that the sage has attained "Brahmanhood [*brāhmaṇya*]" (*Rām* 1.64.11).

As we have seen throughout this study, there is an ambivalence about the status of Viśvāmitra in epic and purāṇic subnarratives. Is he a Brahman? Is he a Kṣatriya? By organizing the Viśvāmitra legends in a progression from Kṣatriyahood to Brahmanhood,

[1] An additional episode of Indra assuming the guise of a Brahman and begging for food at precisely the moment when Viśvāmitra is set to break a thousand-year fast is found in the Gujarati Printing Press edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in four verses (*Rām GPP* 1.65.5-8). Despite Indra's attempt to steal his *tapas*, it is said that Viśvāmitra did not object, gave away his food, "remained silent and still, and stopped breathing" (*Rām GPP* 1.65.8).

the epic not only valorizes the *tapas* that enables the sage to transform himself, but also constructs a moralistic hierarchy of these *varṇas*. While it is through perseverance and compassion that he sheds his Kṣatriyahood, Viśvāmitra must shed *kāma* and *krodha* in order to become a Brahman, and it is during the complementary Menakā and Rambhā legends that this transformation happens.

Menakā and Rambhā: Can sex stop Viśvāmitra? (Rām 1.62-63; Mbh 1.65; BrahmaP 147; SkandaP)

Though it enjoys great currency due to its being embedded within the Śakuntalā story, the Menakā legend is not widely told in epic and purāṇic literature. Aside from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is found in the *Mahabhārata's* Śakuntalā subnarrative (*MBh* 1.65) and appears in variant forms in the *Brahma* and *Skanda Purāṇas* (*BrahmaP* 147, *SkandaP*). The basic plot of the narrative is simple: while Viśvāmitra is engaged in severe *tapas*, the *apsaras* (celestial nymph) Menakā comes and seduces the sage. While in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, she just happens to be bathing at the Puṣkaras where Viśvāmitra is meditating, in the *Mahābhārata*, Indra explicitly orders her to do so, in order to steal away the sage's *tapas* that he fears will cause him to fall from heaven (*Mbh* 1.65.21-25). Viśvāmitra is enchanted with her beauty, gives up his austerities and the two live in conjugal bliss for quite some time, until finally, realizing that he has lost his *tapas*, Viśvāmitra abandons Menakā to return to his austerities. In the *Mahābhārata* version, Menakā is pregnant, gives birth to a daughter, abandons her in the Mālinī river, and returns to heaven. The baby is raised by *śakunta* birds until adopted by the sage Kaṇva, naming his new daughter after the birds that have raised her. It is in his hermitage that Duṣyanta will fall in love with Śakuntalā, but later forget her—this becomes one of the most celebrated epic

and purāṇic subnarratives, adapted into far and away the most well-known work of classical Sanskrit literature, Kalidāsa's fourth-century *Abijñāna-śākuntala*.

Importantly, this second half of the story is not found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* version, where the sage simply "dismissed her with gentle words" after realizing that he had lost his *tapas* (*Rām* 1.62.13). Instead, this epic attaches the legend of Rambhā (*Rām* 1.63). This episode begins in heaven, where Indra instructs Rambhā to seduce the sage (*Rām* 1.63.1). Though she is afraid of his curse, Indra reassures her, promising he will be by her side in the form of a cuckoo (*kokila*), along with Kandarpa, the god of love (*Rām* 1.63.5). As the cuckoo sings and the maiden dances, the sage grows suspicious (*sandeham āgataḥ*) (*Rām* 1.63.9), realizes that Indra is trying to trick him, and angrily curses Rambhā to turn to stone for ten thousand years (*Rām* 1.63.11-12).[2] This burst of anger also results in a loss of *tapas*, and Viśvāmitra must resume his quest for Brahmanhood.

The Rambhā legend is told nowhere else in epic and purāṇic literature, though Yudhiṣṭhira's query to Bhīṣma in the *Anuśāsana Parvan* does mention Viśvāmitra's turning Rambhā to stone (*Mbh* 13.3.11), and the *Brahma Purāṇa* includes a variant legend synthesizing both epic versions, in which Viśvāmitra performs *tapas* to gain Brahmanhood after a squabble with Vasiṣṭha (*BrahmaP* 147.5). First Menakā seduces him, as Indra has commanded her to eliminate his *tapas*; she gives him a daughter and returns to heaven (*BrahmaP* 147.6-7), and the place is called Suravallabha *tīrtha*—'the *tīrtha* of divine delight' (*BrahmaP* 147.8). When two *apsarases* named Gambhīrā and Atigambhīrā (their names meaning "grave" and "very grave") at Indra's behest try to

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[2] Viśvāmitra places a limit on her curse, saying that a "great, radiant Brahman, full of ascetic power" will rescue her (*Rām* 1.63.12). The medieval commentators are unanimous in declaring this Brahman to be Vasiṣṭha (*Rām GPP* 1.64.12), but give little support, and the story is not found in Sanskrit literature.

steal his *tapas* through seduction, Viśvāmitra curses them to turn into rivers; the place where these two rivers unite is called the Apsaras *yuga* (*BrahmaP* 147.21). From the fact that Menakā is first ordered to seduce the sage and births a daughter, we may infer the influence of the *Mahābhārata* version; from the curse of the latter *apsarases*, we may infer an influence of the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Rambhā legend, and it is clear that the purāṇic narrative above all is interested in connecting the sacred power associated with these two geographically-fixed 'realworld' locations to the storyworld force of Viśvāmitra's *tapas*.

While I chose to begin this dissertation with a set of questions about Viśvāmitra, asked by Yudhiṣṭhira, I conclude with the Menakā and Rambhā legends because they appear to be the *Rāmāyaṇa's* attempts to arrive at counter-normative 'answers' to the significance of Viśvāmitra. The Menakā and Rambhā legends constitutes a dialogue between the epics about divine attempts to stop Viśvāmitra's attempt to "become a Brahman by force" (*Mbh* 1.65.29). While in the *Ādi Parvan*, the sage falls victim to his sexuality and loses his *tapas*, the *Rāmāyaṇa's* Viśvāmitra is able to overcome sexual desire, but falls victim to anger in the supplemental Rambhā narrative. In the end, however, he conquers both anger and sexual desire, and remains a singularly counter-normative figure. The answer, for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is that there is no 'answer' for Viśvāmitra's transgressions of *varṇa* laws; they must be understood on their own terms, as manifestations of his *tapas*.

Viśvāmitra: Varṇa and caste, stories and performances

This dissertation has examined three sets of relationships: between ideology and reality, between narratives and discourses, and between texts and performance. In

Chapter Two, I demonstrated that if we think of caste not as a holistic, natural system, but as applications of multiple ideological structures—classical *varṇa* and folk domesticity—onto changing configurations of realworld social individuals and groups (*jātis*), then narratives are sites in which the negotiation between these structures happens. The narrative analyses of Chapters Three, Four, and Five have shown that the primary legends of Viśvāmitra—the *kāmadhenu*, Triśaṅku, and Hariścandra legends—create a representation in which his 'will to power' raises serious questions about normative *varṇa* ideology. The *kāmadhenu* legend contradicts the rigidity of *varṇa* boundaries, the Triśaṅku and Śvapaca legends violate the laws of purity and pollution, while the Hariścandra legend problematizes Brahman dominance. It is through these sorts of questions that Viśvāmitra comes to be a counter-normative character within classical Sanskrit literature. He is used to represent challenge to authority, as well as a dreaded pole of Brahmanhood, to be avoided lest one fall victim to his curse.

Above all, however, I have approached this negotiation of *varṇa* as a performance—as the creation of a homology between storyworld and realworld during an act of telling conceived of as a historical event. Through the analysis of contemporary *kīrtan* representations of Viśvāmitra, we have seen how Vaman-*buwā* Kolhatkar reconfigured the sage's counter-normative challenges to *varṇa* to preach the active roles of ancient, Sanskrit texts (the Vedas and the *purāṇas*) in the religious life of his Marathi *bhakti*-soaked Narad Mandir audience—the 'Brahman folk' of Pune's Sadashiv Peth. It is in the space of performance, I suggest, that we may begin to theorize the questions of textuality and orality, fixity and fluidity, and elite and folk that continue to be raised in

the study of Sanskrit epic and purāṇic literature; this dissertation has been an attempt at such an analysis of 'textual performances.'

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